

Inshore Marine Protected Area and Priority Marine Features Consultation

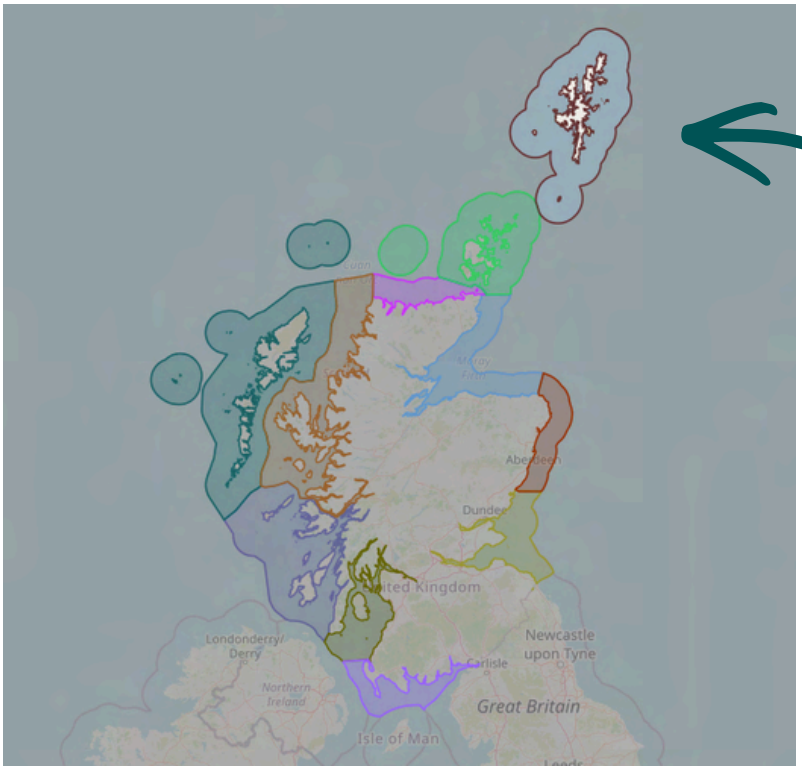
Shetland Islands

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 Shetland Islands Region.

Shetland has its own regional marine plan—the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP)—which guides sustainable use, aquaculture, fishing, energy, and environmental protection across local waters.



Shetland Islands 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.

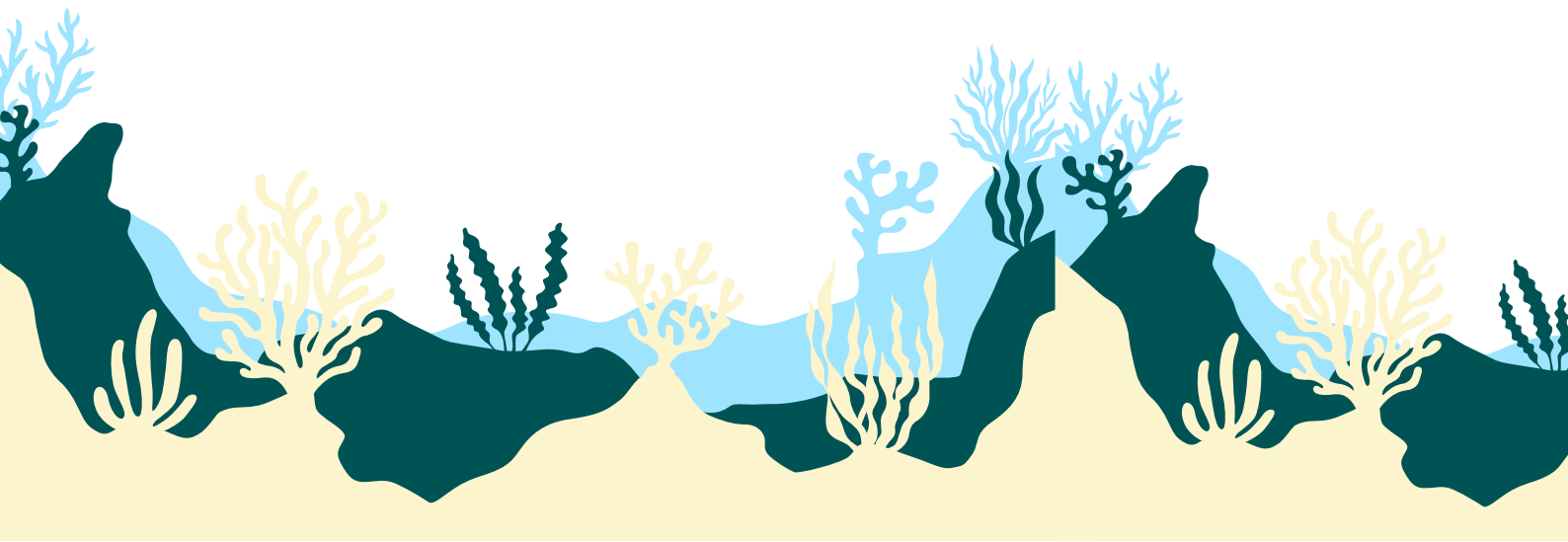
This is the chance for real protection to be implemented in Scotland's inshore waters after over 10 years of simply designation.

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 Shetland Islands, the consultation includes proposed fisheries management measures for:

2 NCMPAs | *3 SACs* | *9 SPAs* | *11 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

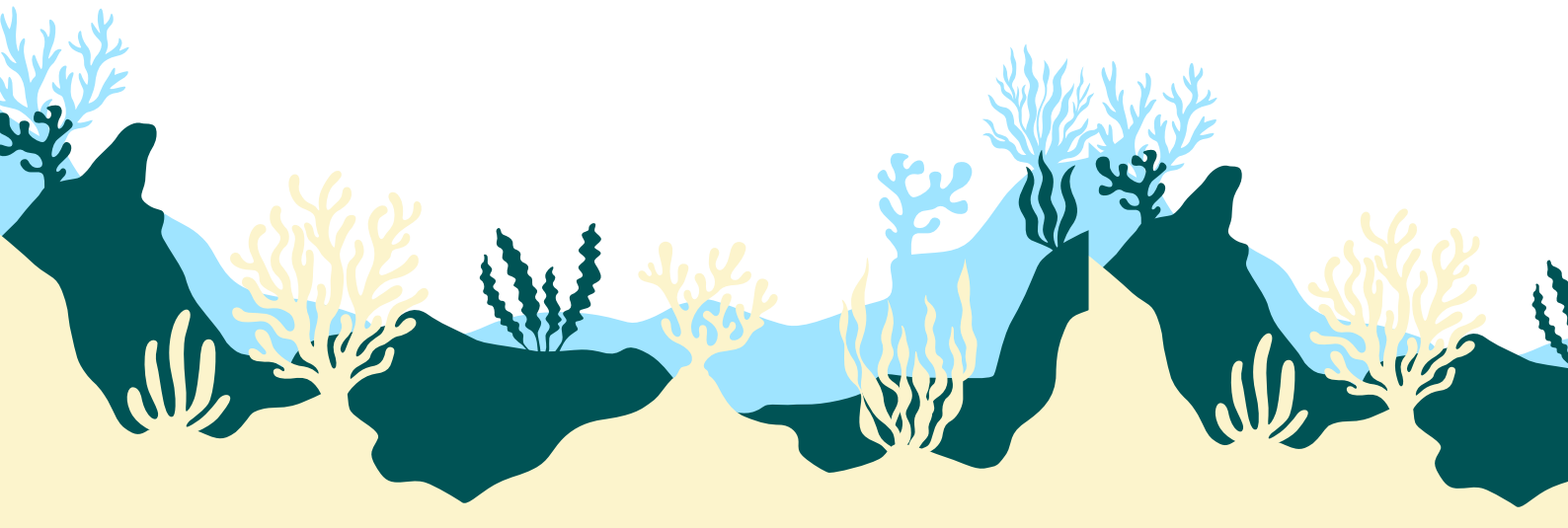
For the majority of the **MPA sites**, 2 options will be proposed. In some cases, only 1 option is proposed due to the conservation objectives of that site.

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: Q392 - 406



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.

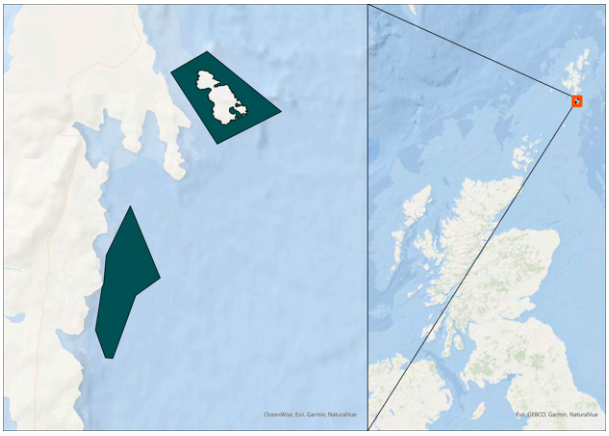
Research has found increases in king scallop and lobster numbers, greater marine biodiversity and healthier habitats, while supporting local communities through activities such as diving, snorkelling and commercial scallop diving. Go to COAST's website to read more.



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

Mousa to Boddam NCMPA and Mousa SAC

SHETLAND ISLANDS



The NCMPA encompasses sandeel grounds around the island of Mousa and off the coast at Boddam in south East Shetland. The SAC is located off the east coast of Shetland Mainland, covers approximately 530 hectares and is aimed at protecting habitats and species of European importance.

Protected Features



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

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



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.



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

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.

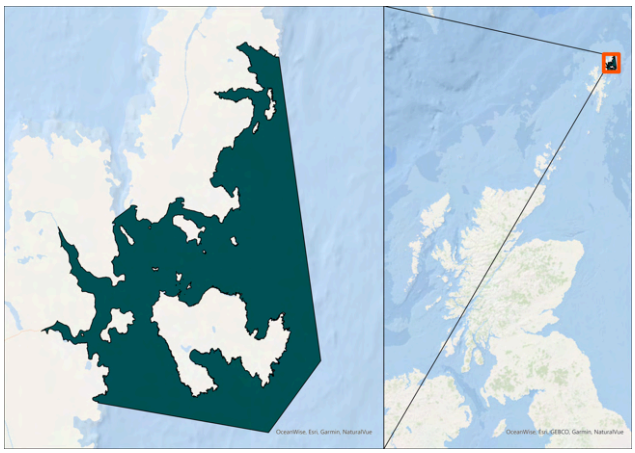
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here.

Respond by email by filling in this on our website, answering Q.392 - Q.394 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

Fetlar to Haroldswick NCMPA

SHETLAND ISLANDS



The Fetlar to Haroldswick NCMPA is located where the North Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean, creating a dynamic and high-energy marine environment. The area has a complex geography of islands, open coastlines, and sheltered bays, supports an exceptional diversity of marine habitats and species.

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.



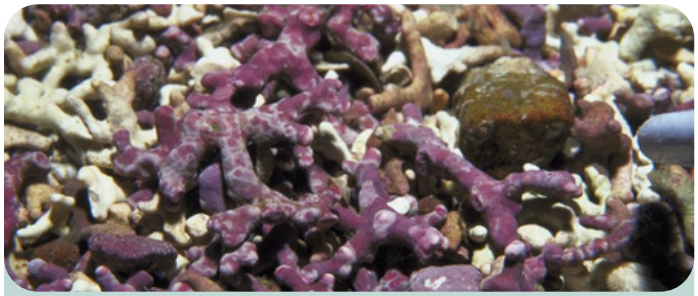
Horse mussel beds
Dense, biogenic marine reefs formed by the large horse mussel and provide habitat to lots of species

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



Kelp and seaweed communities in sublittoral sediment
Shallow habitats where macroalgae grow on mixed sediments, shells, or small stones rather than solid bedrock

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



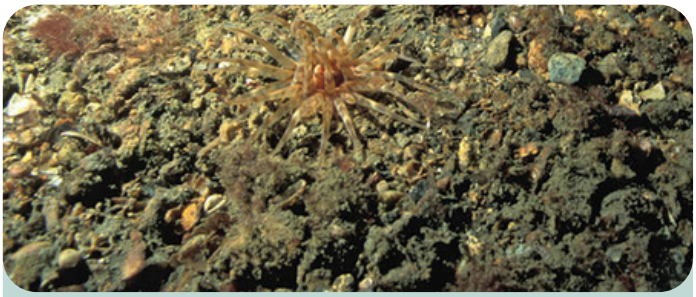
Maerl beds
Unique, slow-growing marine habitats formed by hard, pink-or-purple coralline red seaweeds that build brittle, twig-like skeleton

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

Fetlar to Haroldswick NCMPA

CONTINUED

Protected Features



Shallow tide swept coarse sands with burrowing bivalves

Specialised subtidal habitat of coarse gravelly sand, strong tidal currents, and high biodiversity

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. This is important as most features have slow recovery rates.

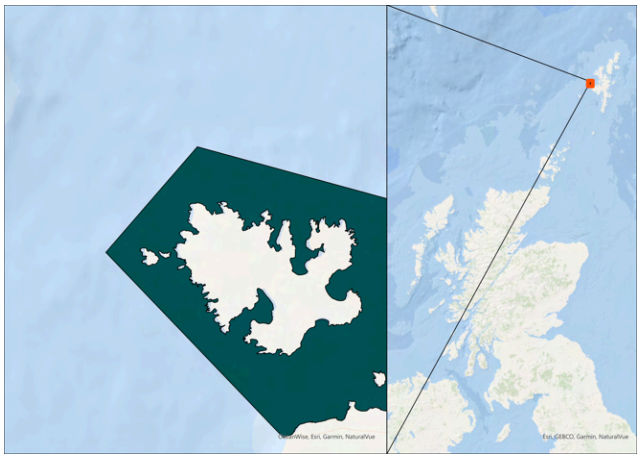
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on our website, answering Q.396 - Q.398 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

Papa Stour SAC

SHETLAND ISLANDS



The SAC, located off the west coast of Shetland, is a marine protected site recognised for its outstanding biodiversity and geological features. The SAC spans over 2,000 hectares and is notable for its rugged underwater terrain, shaped by powerful Atlantic swells and cold northern waters.

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.

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.

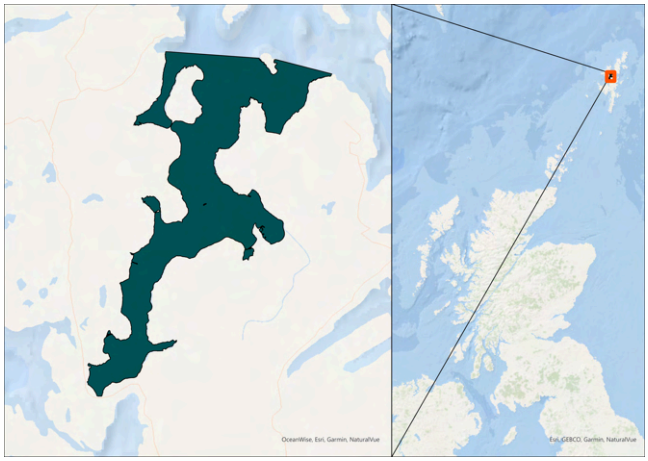
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on the Our Seas Website answering Q.400 - Q.402 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

Sullom Voe SAC

SHETLAND ISLANDS



Sullom Voe SAC is the most northerly SAC in the UK designated for large shallow inlets and bays. It is also the only Scottish example of a ria, a drowned river valley, known locally as a “voe.” Covering approximately 2,691 hectares, the site is characterized by its sheltered marine environment, which supports a rich diversity of boreal-arctic species.

Protected Features



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.



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.



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

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.

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.404 - Q.406 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.

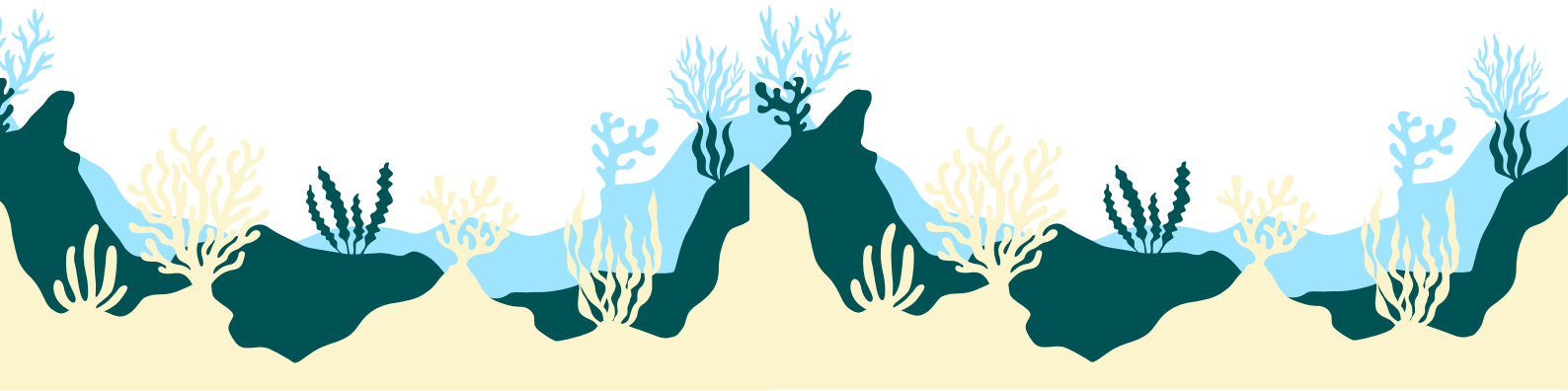
Option 1 - Smaller protected area

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 Shetland Islands. 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 450- 479 as we have set out above.

Back of Ollaberry, Yell Sound

Designated to protect:

Horse mussel beds



Busta Voe (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

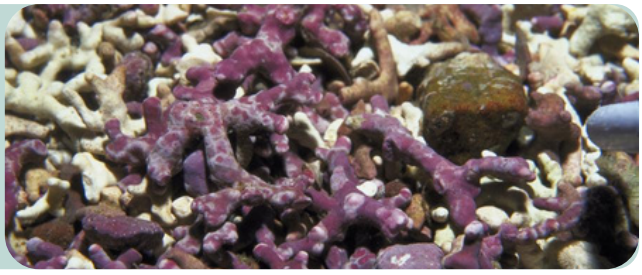
Horse mussel beds



Lunna Ness, North (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds



Linga Sound (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

Horse mussel beds



Lunning Sound (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

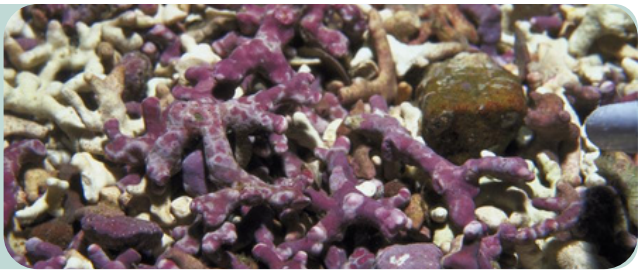
Maerl beds
Maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers



Papa, North (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds



Quey Firth (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

Horse mussel beds



Whalsay, South-West (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

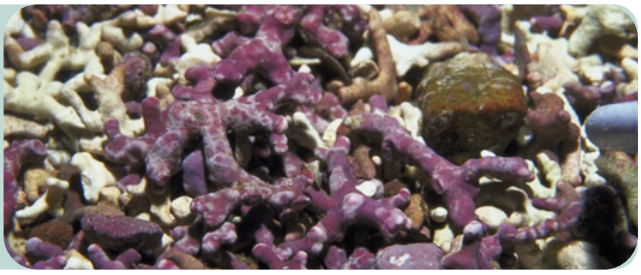
Horse mussel beds



Wadbister Voe (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds



West Mainland Voes (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

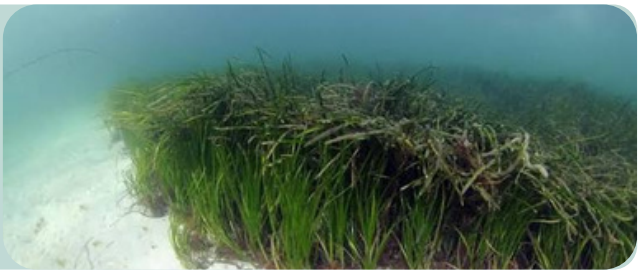
Blue mussel beds
Horse mussel beds
Seagrass beds



West Voe, East Burra (Shetland)

Designated to protect:

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

