

# Blue Marine Foundation submission of 8 September 2022

## PE1951/Z: Reinstate inshore coastal limit on the use of dredge and trawl fishing gears

Blue Marine Foundation (Blue Marine) supports the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation (SCFF) petition to reinstate an inshore limit restricting mobile dredge and bottom-trawling fishing gears.

Blue Marine is dedicated to restoring the ocean to health by addressing overfishing, one of the world's biggest environmental problems.

We have been working with partners, local communities and fishermen in Scotland since our formation over 10 years ago, this has involved:

- Improving the management of inshore fisheries through research and engagement with local fishermen in Berwickshire.
- Helping communities to provide scientific data in support of protection measures for endangered flapper skate, the Lamlash Bay No Take Zone and South Arran NCMPA.
- Campaigning for improved management of the live wrasse fishery.
- Facilitating bottom-up community support for National Marine Parks in Scotland.
- Supporting communities to secure improved management of the salmon farming fishery.

We are also a member of the [Our Seas](#) coalition, a growing coalition of one hundred and thirty marine businesses, Scottish NGOs, fishing associations and community groups calling for: vessel monitoring on all boats, preference to low impact, non-destructive fishing practices and the reinstatement of an inshore limit.

The Scottish Marine Act 2010 committed to not only protect but enhance the health of Scotland's seas<sup>i</sup>. Despite this commitment we have seen significant degradation of Scotland's marine ecosystems, habitats and fisheries. Sadly, the recent Scottish Marine Assessment (SMA 2020) revealed that there has been very little change since the 2010 assessment. Bottom trawling and dredging are main causes of seabed disturbance in the UK's seas and globally<sup>iiiiivv</sup>. The SMA 2020 assessment concluded that bottom towed fishing was widespread

across most Scottish Marine Regions and that fishing has the biggest impact on the marine environment throughout Scotland<sup>vi</sup>.

The Scottish Government has a responsibility for 63 per cent of UK domestic seas. Scottish Ministers have powers to manage and protect important marine habitats and carbon stores as part of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Scotland's MPA network covers over 37 per cent of Scottish waters. On paper we have already exceeded our 30 per cent target and our marine ecosystems and habitats should be recovering. However, the reality is very different. Less than 0.5 per cent of Scotland's waters are fully protected from human activity and over 95 per cent of inshore waters in Scotland are subjected to bottom trawling. An MPA that does not even ban the most damaging activity cannot honestly claim to be effective.

Scotland's seas are heavily depleted and, in our view, continued poor decision-making exacerbates some of the problems. However, the solutions are well known – the barrier to progress is political will, not technical challenges. Fish stocks that are heavily depleted do recover if they are given a chance. Stop overfishing, set aside areas of the sea for marine life and reinstate an inshore coastal limit. When this has been done it does work - fish stocks bounce back, and marine habitats come back:

The benefits of an inshore limit and well managed MPAs are well documented and include:

## **People**

- Significant economic benefits for local fishers and the wider economy<sup>vii</sup>. In addition, Scottish Government research highlights that restricting bottom trawling would have both environmental and economic benefits<sup>viii</sup>.
- Better management could deliver up to £10.5 billion of recreational and other benefits, benefiting coastal communities as well as fishers<sup>ix</sup>.
- A 'spillover effect' has been demonstrated for many Marine Protected Areas, whereby the movement of increased numbers of fish from those areas into surrounding fishing grounds benefits fishers.

## Nature

- Protection and restoration of marine life and fish stocks: Biodiversity has been found to be up to 21 per cent higher<sup>x</sup>, and total biomass up to 600 per cent higher, in fully protected areas versus surrounding waters<sup>xi</sup>.
- Re-establishment of a balanced and functioning ecosystem.

## Climate

- Enhanced resilience to climate change: Marine reserves have been described as ‘insurance’: by limiting direct pressures and enhancing diversity, they give marine life the best chance of developing and adapting to changing conditions<sup>xii</sup>.
- Carbon sequestration and storage - Scotland’s marine sediments store more carbon than our land based, peatlands and terrestrial soils combined and annually Scotland’s blue carbon stores sequester 3 times more than Scottish forestry<sup>xiii</sup>.

Until the 1980s, bottom trawling was banned within three miles of the shore. The removal of this ban, as a response to declining fish populations in offshore areas, led to widespread devastation of inshore habitats and ecosystems. The Government is required to follow the precautionary approach as stated in the UK Fisheries Act. The response to the petition by Marine Scotland doesn’t appear to reflect this. The Scottish Government must apply the precautionary approach by reinstating an inshore limit to bring back fish stocks, marine habitats and sustainable thriving fishing industries.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-scotland-act/>

<sup>ii</sup> HI-RES-REPORT-‘New-perspectives-on-an-old-fishing-practice.pdf (oursharedseas.com)

<sup>iii</sup> Dunkley, F., & Solandt, J. (2021). Marine unProtected Areas: A case for a just transition to ban bottom trawl and dredge fishing in offshore Marine Protected Areas. Retrieved from <https://www.mcsuk.org/media/marine-unprotected-areas-full-report.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Paradis, S., Goni, M., Masque, P., Duran, R., Arjona-Camas, M., Palanques, A., ... Puig, P. (2021). Persistence of Biogeochemical Alterations of Deep-Sea Sediments by Bottom Trawling. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 48

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1618858114>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://marine.gov.scot/sma/assessment-theme/pressures-activities>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/Griffin-Nephrops-latest.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2015/01/management-scottish-inshore-fisheries-assessing-options-change/documents/00467217-pdf/00467217-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00467217.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> WWF, 2021

<sup>x</sup> \*Marine Conservation Society, 2021,

<sup>xi</sup> Sala et al., 2018

<sup>xii</sup> Roberts et al., 2017

