



Scottish Marine Regions Consultation  
Scottish Government  
Marine Planning and Policy Division  
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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: GH/FS/Boundaries  
Date: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

### **CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT SCOTTISH MARINE REGIONS ORDER 2013**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important consultation. Highland Council already has experience of marine planning via a number of initiatives and looks forward to becoming fully engaged with the marine planning process once it becomes established.

Highland Council is content with the proposed marine region boundaries and welcomes their generally close association with the boundaries proposed by the Scottish Coastal Forum and the local authority marine planning zones.

The Council is aware that close co-operation will be required in due course with the architects of the marine region plans for Orkney, Argyll, and the Western Isles, which will abut Highland's marine regions. However, there are antecedents for this co-operation in the form of the Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters initiative, the SSMEI Sound of Mull Marine Spatial Plan, and the Minch Project respectively. Even closer co-operation will be needed with the Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils to help prepare the plan for the Moray marine region jointly. But here also there is a history of co-operation via the Moray Firth partnership and the Council foresees an important role for the Partnership once marine planning in the Moray region begins.

Generally and with a nod to the traditional areas involved, the Highland Council would like to see more of the marine region names being place-specific (e.g. 'Forth and Tay' instead of 'South East', or 'East Aberdeenshire' instead of 'North East') and 'Moray Firth' might be better than just 'Moray', which could create confusion with the local authority area there.

One further important issue the Council would like to see addressed is the level of resources required to ensure that Marine Regions are fully functional and in a position to prepare draft marine plans for consultation, publish final marine plans, monitor their implementation and in time review published plans.

Highland Council does not believe that the creation of Scottish Marine Regions discriminates disproportionately between persons defined by age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion or belief.

Yours faithfully

George Hamilton  
Countryside heritage and Natural Resources Manager

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