

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you support the development of an MPA network in Scotland's Seas?

Yes

Comments

The Scottish Geodiversity Forum is pleased to see appropriate upfront recognition of the importance of geodiversity in the proposed MPA network. We are replying to this consultation on behalf of our member groups and our sister organisation GeoConservation UK. We would be happy to be further involved in supporting the development of a MPA network and ensuring that the importance of geodiversity is recognised.

We support the development of an MPA network in Scotland's Seas. We recommend that the section on 'Why do we need Marine Protected Areas?' (pp. 9-10) should also recognise the value of Scotland's seas for geodiversity as part of our marine heritage and as a foundation for habitats and ecosystem structure.

The Section "Why do we need MPAs" includes Bullet point 6 (p. 9): in proportion to its size, Scotland is the Earth's most geologically diverse country. Almost every period of geological time is captured in the rock record, and many of these can be found in our coastal waters.

We feel this statement does not do sufficient justice to the value of our marine geoheritage. As noted above, Scotland's seas (both inshore and offshore) contain geodiversity features of national and international scientific importance for a range of interests representing the geological evolution of the North-west European continental margin, the dynamics of marine-based ice sheets and their coupling with climate and ocean circulation patterns, and past and present marine processes. So these features are not just about the "rock record" but are also contained in a range of surface features on the seabed that include irreplaceable (relict) examples of glacial processes.

These geodiversity interests are a significant asset for their role in providing ecosystem services, including seabed habitats for marine life and the basis for offshore energy development (oil, gas and renewables) and fisheries.

Individual possible Nature Conservation MPAs

Questions 2 to 27.

Designation:

Yes No

Comments

We do not have the resources to submit a detailed response for each pMPA. However we note that in Appendix A and B the descriptions are variable in their specification of the geodiversity feature details to be protected, although these are correctly specified in supplementary sources.

Unlike the offshore sites, the management of geodiversity interests is not explicitly considered for the inshore sites. It should be considered.

Choices to represent features in the MPA Network

28. Recognising the scientific advice from JNCC included alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, ocean quahog and shelf banks and mounds in the Southern North Sea, do you have a preference or comments on the following combinations to represent these features, bearing in mind Turbot Bank will need to be designated to represent sandeel in this region:

Firth of Forth Banks Complex
Turbot bank and Norwegian Boundary Sedimentary Plain
Or Firth of Forth Banks Complex, Turbot bank and Norwegian Boundary Sedimentary Plain

Comments

The Firth of Forth Banks Complex includes part of a geodiversity key area that would provide additional support for its selection.

29. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessments for the preference you have indicated in the question above, regarding alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, ocean quahog and shelf banks and mounds in the Southern North Sea?

Yes No

Comments

30. Recognising the scientific advice from JNCC included alternatives for representing the burrowed mud feature in the Fladens, do you have a preference or comments on the following combinations to represent these features, bearing in mind the part of Central Fladen (known as Central Fladen (Core)) containing tall seapen (*Funiculina quadrangularis*) will need to be designated to represent tall seapen in this region:

Central Fladen pMPA only
The tall sea-pen component of Central Fladen, plus Western Fladen
Or the tall sea-pen component of Central Fladen, plus South-East Fladen.

Comments

Central Fladen, Western Fladen and South-East Fladen all contain key geodiversity interests. South-East Fladen has the merit of including the Scanner-Scotia-Challenger Pockmark Complex.

31. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessments for the preference you have indicated in the question above, regarding alternatives for representing the burrowed mud feature in the Fladens?

Yes No

Comments

32. Recognising the scientific advice from JNCC included alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, offshore deep sea mud, and burrowed mud in OSPAR Regions III and V, do you have a preference or comments on the following combinations to represent these features:

South-West Sula Sgeir and Hebridean slope
Or Geikie slide and Hebridean slope

Comments

Both South-West Sula Sgeir & Hebridean slope and Geikie slide & Hebridean slope include key geodiversity interests.

33. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessments for the preference you have indicated in the question above, regarding alternatives for representing offshore subtidal sands and gravels, offshore deep sea mud, and burrowed mud in OSPAR Regions III and V?

Yes No

Comments

Sustainability Appraisal

34. Do you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal of the MPA network as a whole?

No

Comments

Final Thoughts

35. On the basis of your preferences on which pMPAs should be designated, do you view this to form a complete or ecologically coherent network, subject to the completion and recommendations of SNH's further work on the 4 remaining search locations?

No

Comments

See comment below

36. Do you have any other comments on the case for designation, management options, environmental or socioeconomic assessments of the pMPAs, or the network as a whole?

Yes

Comments

In line with the vision and actions set out in Scotland's Geodiversity Charter, the Scottish Geodiversity Forum particularly welcomes the recognition and inclusion of geodiversity since it forms an integral part of our marine natural heritage. As it stands, however, the network of possible MPA areas/MPA search locations and existing protected areas includes only partial coverage of geodiversity search features and identified key areas.

To meet the key overall objective of the MPA network to safeguard our most important natural and cultural heritage features in Scottish waters based on the principle of sustainable use, further consideration is required as to how these 'undesigned' geodiversity interests will be addressed through marine spatial planning.