

# **Fairer Scotland Duty Summary - Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore MPAs - July 2025**

September 2025

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## **Title of policy, strategy or programme**

Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas

## **Summary of aims and expected outcomes of strategy, proposal, programme or policy**

The aim of this policy is to manage the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Scottish offshore region in a way that conservation objectives can be achieved, and support sustainable use of our marine environment.

The Scottish Government's vision for the marine environment is of clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas; managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people. MPAs have an important role to play in supporting this vision. MPAs are sites containing habitats and species that have been identified as being of conservation importance to Scotland, most are a subset of species and habitats identified on national, UK or international lists. They enable the focused protection of habitats and species which are essential to the marine ecosystem.

Implementing fisheries management measures in MPAs within the Scottish offshore region is an essential step to managing the MPA network. Scottish Ministers have committed to implementing fisheries management measures for existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) where these are not already in place. In the offshore waters of Scotland (12-200 nautical miles) there are 20 sites which require the implementation of fisheries management measures to support the achievement of site conservation objectives.

Fisheries management measures will mean that only certain types of fishing are permitted within the area, and the measures proposed will depend on the sensitivities and distribution of protected species and habitats, and associated conservation objectives of each site. The purpose of management measures is to support the conservation objectives of the protected habitats and species to be achieved.

The network is managed under the principles of sustainable use.. By protecting our natural capital, we protect and support the services provided by healthy, productive and biodiverse marine ecosystems, building resilience into marine industries and strengthening food security.

Collectively the management of MPAs will help safeguard marine biodiversity and build resilience to the impacts of climate change, supporting our seas to provide economic, social and wider benefits for people, the economy and society.

## Summary of evidence

An SEIA was conducted to identify and assess the potential economic and social effects of the proposed policy on the lives and circumstances of people, their families and their communities.

For the majority of the proposed sites the socio-economic costs of the measures are either low, or have a large range. For these sites, either minimal or possible negative effects are identified. The combined worst-case impacts from management options for a small number of sites could have locally significant adverse social impacts in specific coastal communities. There are three ports or port districts (Fraserburgh, Shetland and Ullapool) that would be affected in terms of both the loss of landings to the port, and the loss of employment opportunities on vessels for which they are the home port. Therefore, they are at increased risk of adverse negative socio-economic consequences from the combined effects of the site management measures.

The proposed management options have the potential to put between 9 and 101 FTE jobs at risk in the commercial fishing sector and its supply chain. These impacts are most likely to fall on those of working age, and on men who make up the vast majority of those employed in commercial sea fishing. There could be further employment impacts in downstream activities like fish processing, which are likely to be more evenly distributed between men and women. These impacts could generate economic and social costs for the individuals concerned and for their families (including children) at the higher levels. However, some displacement of fishing activity is likely to occur and hence the impacts on employment are likely to be lower than the maximum estimate.

The gross wages and salaries of fishermen are likely to have considerable variation across fleets and roles in the sector, and include individuals in the lowest-paid 10% of the Scottish economy's workforce. It is likely, therefore, that the proposed management options at the sites could mainly impact on income groups falling from the lowest paid 10% to the middle 80% of workers.

Further potential social impacts in the local communities affected, such as on culture, heritage, crime, health, education, access to services, or changes to the local environment are not considered likely to occur in the majority of affected locations.

The Scottish Government's Monitoring the Socio-Economic Impacts of Marine Protected Areas report, published in 2020, assessed the evidence on socio-economic impacts of Scotland's MPA network between 2016 and 2018.

The MPAs were thought to have wider social benefits. At the centre of many of these social impacts were a number of very active community groups. These groups were found to have organised a large array of activities and events, and raised awareness

and educated the public about marine conservation and the rich diversity of their local waters.

Respondents from Environmental Non-Government Organisations (eNGOs) and community groups mentioned research projects, data collection campaigns and collaborations with research institutions, all aimed at improving the evidence base for MPAs. They highlighted that these events and activities provided opportunities for people to gain skills and experiences that might normally be too expensive or hard to reach.

ENGOS described further economic benefits associated with the growth in tourism, which they linked to MPAs, and the increased opportunities for attracting funding for community group activities. Such funding can lead to the employment of staff who move to an area, spend money and contribute to the community.

Respondents observed improvements in the marine environment, which they attributed to MPAs. Many stated that this was the most important positive impact of the MPAs and described feelings of hope and inspiration at the thought of the improvements that were possible and what that could mean for their local area.

### **Summary of assessment findings**

There is no evidence to suggest alternative approaches to the policy. Putting in place fisheries management measures for existing MPAs where these are not already in place, in order to achieve the conservation objectives for the protected features, is a statutory requirement for Scottish Ministers. This is essential to support the recovery and resilience of our marine environment, and the industries that rely on it.

The proposed fisheries management measures we are aiming to introduce are underpinned by robust scientific evidence which demonstrates the need for fisheries management in each site.

The Scottish Government have carried out extensive engagement with the fishing industry and coastal communities in recent years to develop fisheries management measures which balance our commitment to environmental protection with sustainable marine use. This approach is intended to help reduce potential inequalities of outcome.

### **Sign off**

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