

Offshore Marine Protected Areas in Scottish Waters

Strategic Environmental Assessment Post Adoption Statement

January 2026

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1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Scottish Government is committed to a clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environment that meets the long-term needs of people and nature. This includes managing our seas sustainably to protect their rich biological diversity and to ensure that our marine ecosystems continue to provide economic, social and wider benefits for people, industry and society¹.
- 1.1.2 The designation and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) will make a significant contribution to the protection, enhancement and health of the marine area. These include nature conservation Marine Protected Areas^{2,3,4} (NCMPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation^{5,6} (SACs) (hereafter these NCMPAs and SACs are referred to as MPAs when they are being considered collectively). These designations arise from domestic legislation, as well as wider UK and international legislation focused on building a cohesive network of protected areas to benefit the conservation of sensitive and representative marine species and habitats.
- 1.1.3 There are currently 36 NCMPAs located within Scotland's seas, 13 of which are offshore⁷. In addition, there are 58 SACs with marine components in Scotland, 47 of which are wholly in inshore waters⁸, nine are completely in offshore waters⁹, and a further two sites which have parts in both inshore and offshore waters.

¹ Scottish Government (2025). Marine Environment: Conservation [online] Available at: [Conservation - Marine environment - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

² Scottish Government (2025). Marine environment: Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) [online] Available at: [Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Marine environment - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

³ NatureScot (2024) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) [online] Available at: [Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) | NatureScot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

⁴ JNCC (2019) Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas [online] Available at: [Nature Conservation MPAs | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

⁵ NatureScot (2024) Special Areas of Conservations (SACs) [online] Available at: [Special Areas of Conservation \(SACs\) | NatureScot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

⁶ JNCC (2020) SACs with marine components [online] Available at: [SACs with marine components | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

⁷ JNCC (2019) Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas [online] Available at: [Nature Conservation MPAs | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

⁸ The inshore area extends from the coast to the limit of the territorial sea (i.e. 12 nautical miles (NM) off the coast)

⁹ The offshore area extends from the limit of the territorial sea to the UK Continental Shelf Claim Limit (i.e. 12–200 NM off the coast).

- 1.1.4 In line with the relevant legislation, suitable management measures must be implemented at each site to enable the achievement of conservation objectives¹⁰. The Scottish Government proposed the implementation of fisheries management measures for 20 offshore MPAs (comprising 10 NCMPAs and 10 SACs) to ensure the site conservation objectives are achieved.
- 1.1.5 Measures were also initially developed for Turbot Bank NCMPA which would restrict targeted sandeel within the site. However, The Sandeel (Prohibition Of Fishing) (Scotland) Order 2024 came into force on 26 March 2024 ahead of the 2024 fishery season and applies to all vessels (UK and EU) fishing within Scottish waters¹¹. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) consider sandeels to be in favourable condition within this NCMPA and that in the absence of a targeted Sandeel fishery, no additional management of fishing activity is necessary to achieve the conservation objective for the Sandeel feature for Turbot Bank NCMPA¹².
- 1.1.6 The location of the 20 MPAs are shown in Figure 1. The location of Turbot Bank NCMPA is also shown for reference although specific management measures are no longer proposed to be implemented for this site.
- 1.1.7 The proposed implementation of fisheries management measures for all the offshore MPAs shown in Figure 1 were subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The associated Environmental Report was published for consultation¹³ and the consultation ended on 14 October 2024¹⁴. The [consultation analysis report](#) presents a detailed analysis of the responses to the consultation¹⁵.

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Site Proposal Document [online] Available at: [Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Site Proposal Document - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

¹¹ The Sandeel (Prohibition of Fishing) (Scotland) Order 2024. Available at: [The Sandeel \(Prohibition of Fishing\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) (accessed 18/08/2025)

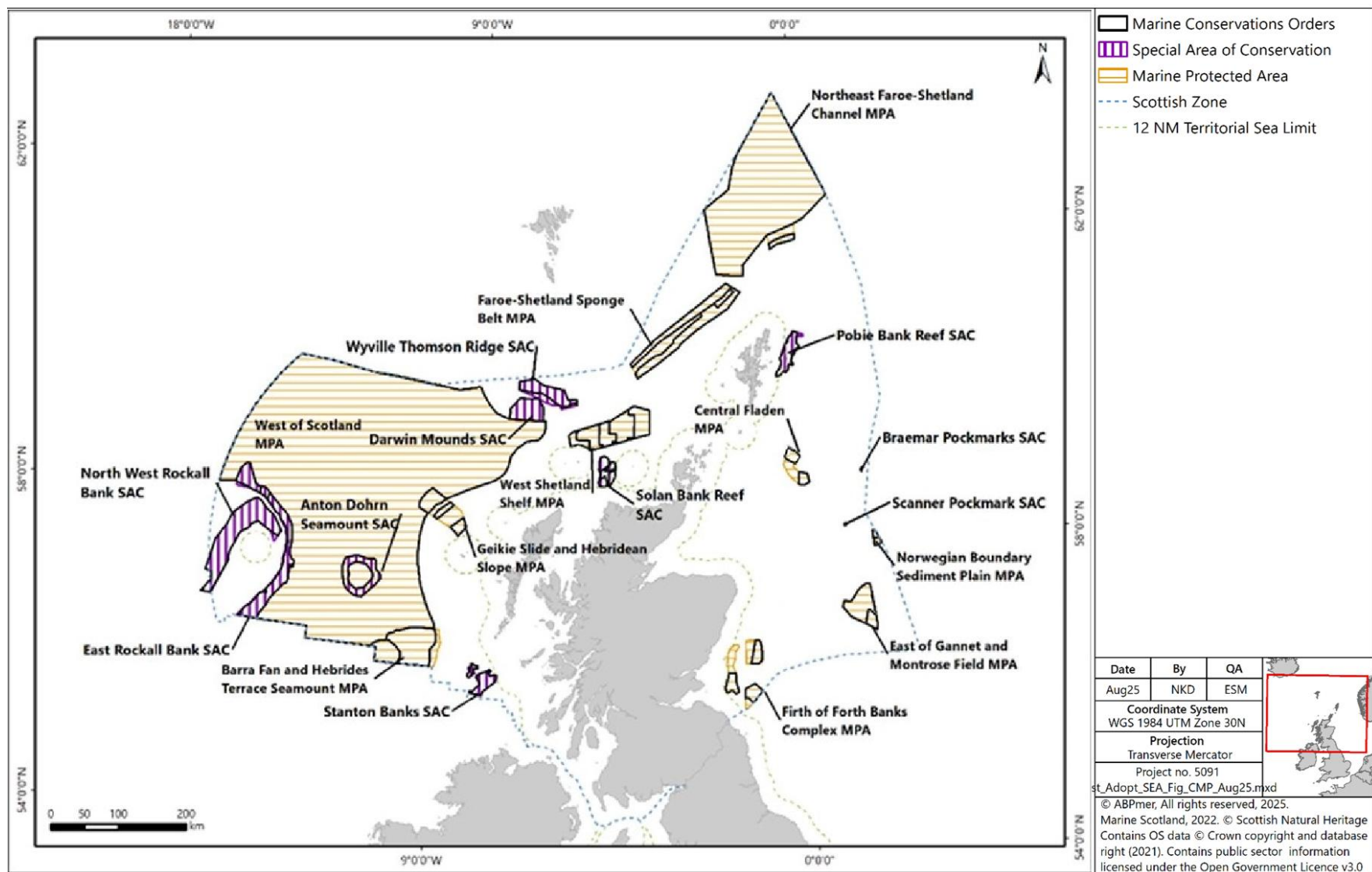
¹² Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Site Proposal Document [online] Available at: [Site Proposal Document - Protecting Biodiversity within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

¹³ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report [online] Available at: [Supporting documents - Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): consultation [online] Available at: [Supporting documents - Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\): consultation - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

¹⁵ Marine Directorate (2025). Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): consultation analysis. Available at: [Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\): consultation analysis - gov.scot](#) (accessed 05/12/2025)

Figure 1 Map of offshore MPAs that are subject to the current management proposals



- 1.1.8 The consultation revealed a divide between industry and nature conservation stakeholders when it came to zonal (Option 1) versus full site (Option 2) management measures. Proponents of full site measures underscored the importance of environmental issues and long-term recovery, while supporters of zonal measures argued for stakeholder inclusivity and a proportionate approach which allows for industry to continue to operate in these areas while achieving environmental goals.
- 1.1.9 Following the public consultation, 13 of the MPAs proceeded with zonal (Option 1) management measures and five of the MPAs proceeded with the full site (Option 2) management measures. The zonal (Option 1) measures have been revised at the two remaining MPAs to increase the spatial extent of demersal mobile gear restrictions following updated advice from JNCC received after consultation.

2 The Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

- 2.1.1 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (“the 2004 Regulations”) requires that certain public plans, programmes and strategies be assessed for their potential effects on the environment. Therefore a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried out¹⁶. The SEA is a way of examining plans, programmes and strategies as they develop, to identify any significant effects they may have on the environment. It ensures that environmental considerations are taken into account. The process also requires the identification of measures to avoid, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects, and good practice encourages consideration of opportunities to enhance the environmental performance of the plan.
- 2.1.2 This SEA process began with the production of a combined Screening and Scoping Report which was published in March 2022, setting out the proposed approach to the SEA, including the proposed scope and level of detail. Representations received from the SEA Consultation Authorities¹⁷ at the scoping stage helped to inform the following stages of the SEA process.
- 2.1.3 The assessment stage of the SEA was progressed, and the production of the Environmental Report was published for consultation on 19 August 2024¹⁸, together with a number of documents, including the following:
- A consultation paper explaining what the consultation aims to achieve, how it was developed, and what it will cover¹⁹;
 - A site proposal document describing the process, justification and evidence used to develop site-specific management measures²⁰;

¹⁶ UK Government (2004) The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 [online] Available at: [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#) (accessed 05/12/2025)

¹⁷ Historic Environment Scotland (HES), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and NatureScot.

¹⁸ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report [online] Available at: [Supporting documents - Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

¹⁹ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): consultation [online] Available at: [Supporting documents - Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\): consultation - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²⁰ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Site Proposal Document [online] Available at: [Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Site Proposal Document - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

- Draft Fisheries Assessments for each site that management measures were proposed for;
 - A Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA);
 - A Sustainability Appraisal summarising the outcomes of the SEA and SEIA;
 - Partial Business Regulatory Impact Assessments (BRIAs); and
 - An Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA).
- 2.1.4 In addition to seeking feedback on the proposed management measures for 20 offshore MPAs, the consultation sought views and comments on the proposed amendment to the West of Scotland NCMPA boundary. This was proposed to aid in the implementation of fisheries management measures within the NCMPA and resolve an issue with the original site boundary designation.
- 2.1.5 Following consultation, an independent analysis of all consultation responses received was carried out²¹. The views expressed in the consultation helped to inform the proposed management measures for offshore MPAs.
- 2.1.6 This Post Adoption Statement concludes the SEA process and sets out those ways in which the findings of the Environmental Report, and the views expressed by consultees have been taken into account.
- 2.1.7 Regulation 16(4) of the 2004 Regulations sets out the information that should be included in the Post Adoption Statement. This can be summarised as:
- How the environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan, programme, or strategy (Section 3);
 - How the Environmental Report has been taken into account (Section 4);
 - How the opinions of consultees have been taken into account (Section 5);
 - The reasons for choosing the plan, programme or strategy as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives considered (Section 6); and
 - The measures to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan, programme or strategy (Section 7).

²¹ Scottish Government (2025) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): consultation analysis. Available at: [Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\): consultation analysis - gov.scot](#) (accessed 09/12/2025)

3 Integration of Environmental Considerations

- 3.1.1 This section explains how key environmental considerations were identified and how these were taken into account in the plan to implement management measures for offshore MPAs.
- 3.1.2 The UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009²² outlines a general objective to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Act (Section 123), Scottish Ministers have a duty to designate NCMPAs to the UK network of MPAs which contributes to the conservation of improvement of the marine environment in the UK marine area²³.
- 3.1.3 The MPA network contributes to further duties and obligations of the Scottish Government, including the commitment for Good Environmental Status under the UK Marine Strategy²⁴. A well-managed MPA network will help to fulfil the commitment to OSPAR Commission's strategic objective to establish an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas²⁵. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 sets out the ambitions of the Scottish Government to be nature positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity by 2045²⁶.
- 3.1.4 There is a legislative requirement for Scottish Ministers to take conservation measures in SACs in a way that corresponds with the ecological requirements of the habitats and species for which the sites have been designated²⁷. In doing so, under the Habitats Regulations²⁸ as amended by the Conservation of

²² Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 [online] Available at: [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²³ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Site Proposal Document [online] Available at: [Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Site Proposal Document - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²⁴ UK Government (2019) Marine strategy part one: UK updated assessment and Good Environmental Status [online] Available at: [Marine strategy part one: UK updated assessment and Good Environmental Status - GOV.UK](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²⁵ OSPAR Commission (2003) Guidance for the development and management of the OSPAR network [online] Available at: [Guidance for the development and management of the OSPAR network | OSPAR Commission](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²⁶ Scottish Government (2024) Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 [online] Available at: [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²⁷ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Site Proposal Document [online] Available at: [Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Site Proposal Document - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

²⁸ Following the UK leaving the EU, the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Offshore Petroleum Activities (Conservation of Habitats) Regulations 2001 (collectively known as the Habitats Regulations) have been amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019²⁹, they are required to have regard to the need to maintain or restore the protected features of the site to favourable conservation status; the economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics; and any management scheme which has been established for the site.

- 3.1.5 Scottish Ministers have a duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to exercise functions which could significantly affect an offshore NCMPA in a manner that best furthers the conservation objectives of the site (or where that is not possible, least hinders the achievement of the objectives)³⁰.
- 3.1.6 The preparation of the Scoping Report and environmental baseline for the SEA ensured that environmental considerations were considered at an early stage in the assessment of the proposed management measures for offshore MPAs. Consultation with the SEA Consultation Authorities at the scoping stage assisted in confirming key environmental issues for further consideration in the assessment stage. The proposed management measures were subject to environmental assessment with the results of the assessment informing their further development.
- 3.1.7 Environmental considerations were therefore integral to the development of management measures for offshore MPAs and the plan to implement them.

²⁹ The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 [online] Available at: [The Conservation of Habitats and Species \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

³⁰ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Site Proposal Document [online] Available at: [Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Site Proposal Document - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

4 The Findings of the SEA

4.1.1 The Environmental Report details the conclusions and recommendations of the assessment on the plan to implement management measures for offshore MPAs. The key themes drawn from the assessment are discussed below:

- The SEA findings concluded that the proposed measures would result in an overall (cumulative) beneficial impact for the overarching topic of biodiversity at all of the offshore MPAs apart from at three sites where the proposed measures are assessed as having a negligible neutral impact (Turbot Bank NCMPA³¹, Anton Dohrn Seamount NCMPA, and Solan Bank Reef SAC) and one site where the proposed measures are assessed as having no impact (Darwin Mounds SAC). The overall effects of the proposed measures were assessed as follows:
 - None (1 site): Darwin Mounds SAC;
 - Negligible neutral (3 sites): Turbot Bank NCMPA, Anton Dohrn Seamount NCMPA and Solan Bank Reef SAC;
 - Minor beneficial (10 sites): Braemar Pockmarks SAC, East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA, North-East Faroe-Shetland Channel NCMPA, Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain NCMPA, Scanner Pockmark SAC, Geikie Slide and Hebridean Slope NCMPA, Stanton Banks SAC, West of Scotland NCMPA, West Shetland Shelf NCMPA and Wyville-Thomson Ridge SAC;
 - Moderate beneficial (5 sites): Central Fladen NCMPA, Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt NCMPA, Pobie Bank Reef SAC, East Rockall Bank SAC and North West Rockall Bank SAC; and
 - Major beneficial (2 sites): Firth of Forth Banks Complex NCMPA and Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount NCMPA.
- In sites where significant major or moderate beneficial impacts have been assessed, there is also potential for minor to moderate spill-over benefits to occur outside the sites depending on the scale of the existing fishing intensity that would be restricted and size of the protected area.
- Where management measures result in displacement of fishing effort, this could have negligible or minor adverse impacts on the biodiversity of the areas where the activity is displaced to. However, such displacement is likely to be to areas that are already fished and the impact of the additional fishing pressure in these areas is generally not considered to be significant as they will already have a community composition which reflects this fishing pressure. There is considered to be the potential for significant moderate adverse effects where the fishing activity is displaced a long distance and is more likely to result in new grounds opening up with associated adverse environmental effects.

³¹ Management measures are no longer proposed to be implemented at Turbot Bank SAC as explained in Section 1.

- Adverse environmental effects associated with a potential increased fishing effort from other gear types that are not targeted by the proposed measures are not significant and generally negligible or minor in scale, depending on whether the existing targeted fishing activity can be displaced to nearby existing fishing grounds and also the scale of other gear types currently used within the protected site and surrounding area. Where fishing activity cannot be displaced locally and there is a moderate to high level of non-targeted gear type within or near to the site, the impacts are considered moderate.
- The increased protection brought about by the measures will provide potential future benefits to habitats and species as they will restrict new fisheries using the targeted gear type from setting up in the protected area.
- The proposed management measures for offshore MPAs together with existing management measures for inshore MPAs are considered to strengthen the overall protection of MPAs and will in turn result in an overall combined beneficial impact on biodiversity within Scotland's waters.
- No significant adverse environmental effects were identified and therefore no mitigation or monitoring measures were proposed as part of the assessment process.

4.1.2 A key outcome from the SEA process was the reaffirmation that the proposed management measures offer an opportunity to protect species and habitats and provide wider environmental benefits. These principles are embedded in the plan to implement management measures for offshore MPAs and is a key requirement to fulfil a number of environmental and conservation objectives (Section 3).

5 How the Opinions Expressed have been taken into Account

- 5.1.1 The Marine Directorate held a public consultation on the proposals from 19 August 2024 to 14 October 2024³². The Environmental Report was published for consultation alongside a number of other reports, including the consultation paper, site proposal document, Draft Fisheries Assessments, an SEIA, a Sustainability Appraisal, partial BRIAs and a ICIA.
- 5.1.2 Views were invited on a series of questions in relation to the proposed management measures and the proposed amendment of the West of Scotland NCMPA boundary. Appendix B of this report contains a complete list of the consultation questions.
- 5.1.3 Questions 1 to 10 were general questions on the overall policy and the supporting documents. Questions 12 to 30 then gave the option to provide site specific comments for the proposed measures for 20 offshore MPAs. Questions 32 to 33 sought views on the proposed amendment to the boundary of the West of Scotland NCMPA.
- 5.1.4 The consultation received 3,881 valid responses, with 97% submitted by individuals and 3% by organisations. Campaign responses accounted for 95% of submissions.
- 5.1.5 The discussion surrounding zonal (Option 1) versus full site (Option 2) management measures revealed divergent views from consultation respondents.
- 5.1.6 Respondents preferring zonal measures argued that these approaches were informed by extensive stakeholder collaboration and designed to balance environmental objectives with the continuation of fishing activities.
- 5.1.7 Zonal measures were characterised by these respondents as cost-effective, achieving targeted conservation outcomes while minimising disruption to the fishing industry. This approach was also viewed as vital for maintaining economic resilience and food security. However, critics of zonal measures warned of potential fragmentation in protection, arguing that leaving certain ecological features unprotected could compromise conservation goals and fail to adequately address the pressures on sensitive habitats and species.

³² Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries management measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): consultation [online] Available at: [Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

- 5.1.8 Advocates for full site measures stressed the necessity of comprehensive protection to restore ecosystems to favourable conservation status. These respondents argued that full site approaches better align with international conservation obligations and enhance resilience to climate change by preserving biodiversity.
- 5.1.9 Full site measures were seen by these respondents as crucial for mitigating cumulative ecological impacts and supporting long term recovery. Conversely, opponents expressed concerns over the socio-economic costs of full site closures, questioning whether the additional environmental benefits justified the financial and social trade-offs. Risks such as displacement of fishing activities, increased spatial conflicts, and adverse impacts on coastal communities reliant on fishing were frequently cited.
- 5.1.10 In terms of the Environmental Report, the SEA prompted discussions about balancing ecological and socio-economic considerations, with some respondents emphasising the need for deeper analysis of displacement and spill-over effects. Gaps in assessing the welfare of marine species were also noted.
- 5.1.11 As explained in Section 3.2 of the Environmental Report, the SEA did not include consideration of socio-economic effects as this was assessed by the SEIA which was reported separately. The Sustainability Appraisal, which is also reported separately, considered the potential environmental, economic and social effects of implementing the proposed management measures, drawing on information contained in the Environmental Report and SEIA.
- 5.1.12 As set out in Section 3.5 of the Environmental Report, the potential for displacement of fishing activities (including from non-UK vessels) and spill-over effects were assessed in detail for each individual offshore MPA in Appendix C of the Environmental Report. This assessment was informed by available data, including existing fishing activity data across different gear types held by Scottish Government, spatio-temporal information on the existing environment, and the sensitivity of features to changes in fishing pressures.
- 5.1.13 The assessment of potential benefits to habitats and species from the proposed management measures for each offshore MPA within each individual assessment table in Appendix C of the Environmental Report included consideration of protected features as well as the biological communities associated with those features. The improved environmental conditions and thus welfare of marine species that would be brought about by the proposed measures was therefore considered to some extent.
- 5.1.14 In summary, the consultation revealed a fundamental divide between advocates of conservation and industry stakeholders when it came to zonal or full site measures. Proponents of full site measures underscored the importance of environmental issues and long-term recovery, while supporters of zonal

measures argued for stakeholder inclusivity and a proportionate approach which also allowed for industry to continue to operate in these areas while achieving environmental goals.

- 5.1.15 Following the consultation, Scottish Government has decided to implement the management measures as set out in Table 1. In summary, 13 of the MPAs will proceed with zonal (Option 1) management measures and five of the MPAs will proceed with the full site management measures, where they were the only option previously considered. The zonal (Option 1) measures have been revised at the two remaining MPAs to increase the spatial extent of demersal mobile gear restrictions that overlap the protected features, specifically burrowed mud at the Central Fladen NCMPA and offshore deep-sea muds at the East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA.
- 5.1.16 The revisions at these two sites take account of post-consultation advice from JNCC indicating that the previously proposed zonal (Option 1) measures were insufficient to adequately protect the features. The areas comprising the amended zonal measures boundaries for demersal mobile gears is 505 km² at Central Fladen NCMPA (176 km² larger than originally proposed) and 1,557 km² at East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA (356 km² larger than originally proposed). These revised areas are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3 respectively.

Table 1 Management measures for Offshore MPAs

Site name	Protected feature	Type of measure	Management measures
1. Braemar Pockmarks SAC	Submarine structures made by leaking gases	Full site	Demersal mobile and demersal static gears prohibited throughout site.
2. Central Fladen MPA	Burrowed mud	Zonal - Option 1 (extended)	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile gears.
3. East of Gannet and Montrose Field MPA	Offshore deep-sea muds	Zonal - Option 1 (extended)	Mechanised dredge and beam trawling prohibited throughout site. Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile gears (excluding seines).
	Ocean quahog aggregations (including sands and gravels as their supporting habitat)		
4. Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt MPA	Deep-sea sponge aggregations	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile and demersal static gears.
	Offshore subtidal sands and gravels		
	Ocean quahog aggregations		
5. Firth of Forth Banks Complex MPA	Ocean quahog aggregations	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of beam trawls, demersal trawls and mechanised dredges.
	Offshore subtidal sands and gravels		
6. Northeast Faroe-Shetland Channel MPA	Deep-sea sponge aggregations	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile and demersal static gears.
	Offshore sands and gravels		
	Deep-sea muds		
7. Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain MPA	Ocean quahog aggregations (including sands and gravels as their supporting habitat)	Zonal - Option 1	Mechanised dredges, beam trawls and demersal trawls (including pair trawls/seines) prohibited from the whole site. Zonal exclusion of demersal seines.

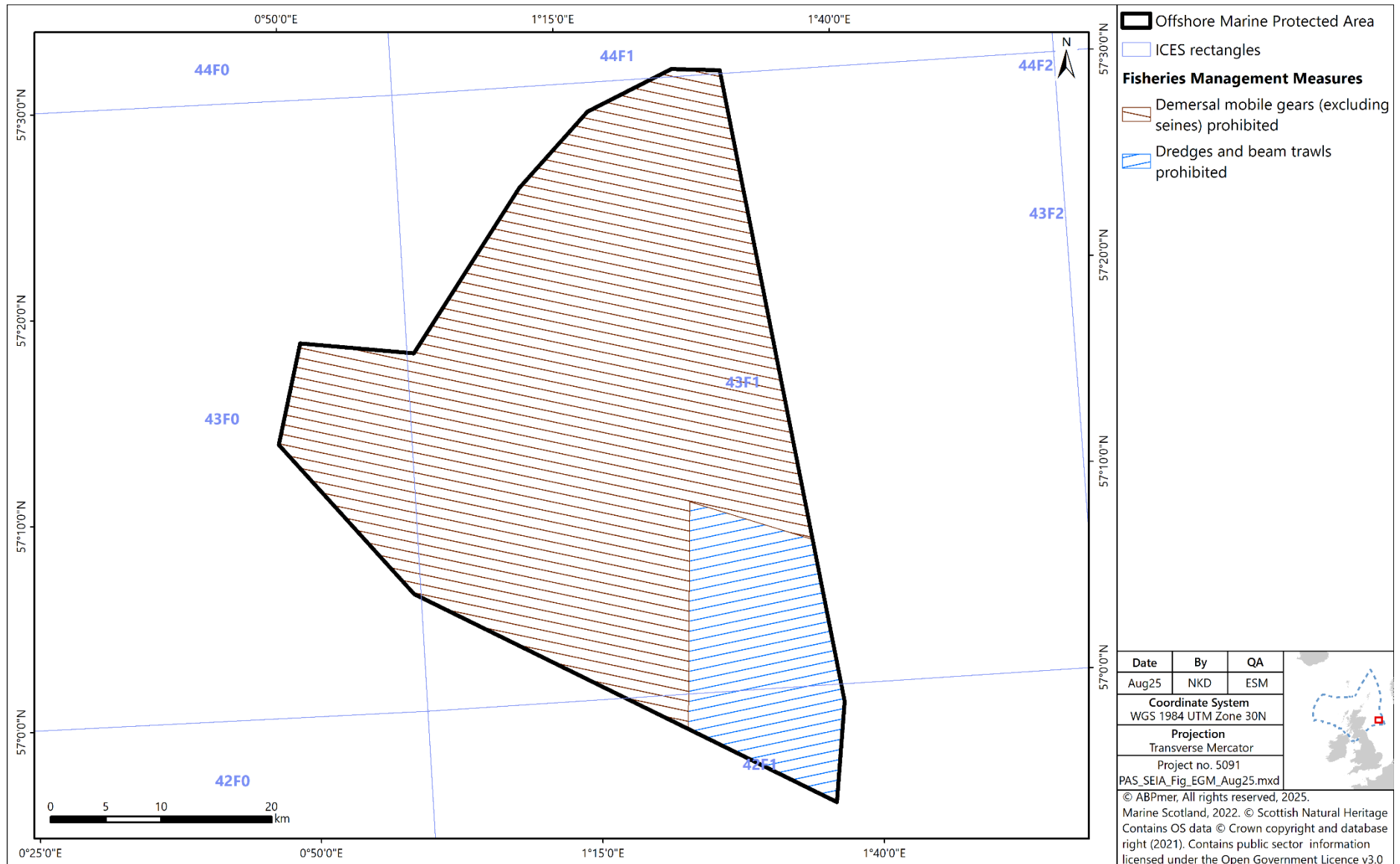
Site name	Protected feature	Type of measure	Management measures
8. Pobie Bank Reef SAC	Bedrock and stony reef	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile gears.
9. Scanner Pockmark SAC	Submarine structures made by leaking gases	Full site	Demersal mobile gears and demersal static gears prohibited throughout site.
10. Anton Dohrn Seamount SAC	Stony, bedrock and biogenic reef	Full site	Demersal mobile gears and demersal static gears prohibited throughout site.
11. Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount MPA	Seamount communities	Zonal - Option 1	Demersal mobile gears prohibited throughout site. Demersal static gear prohibited from seamount feature.
	Offshore sands and gravels/		
	Deep-sea muds		
12. Darwin Mounds SAC	Stony, bedrock and biogenic reef	Full site	Demersal mobile and demersal static gears prohibited throughout site.
13. East Rockall Bank SAC	Stony, bedrock and biogenic reef	Zonal - Option 1	Demersal mobile gears prohibited from a zone covering 94% of site. Demersal static gears prohibited in areas of known/predicted biogenic reef.
14. Geikie Slide and Hebridean Slope MPA	Burrowed mud (sea-pens and burrowing megafauna)	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile gears.
	Offshore subtidal sands and gravels		
	Offshore deep-sea muds		
15. Northwest Rockall Bank SAC	Stony and biogenic reef	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile and demersal static gears across 98% of the site.

Site name	Protected feature	Type of measure	Management measures
16. Solan Bank Reef SAC	Bedrock and stony reef	Zonal - Option 1	Mechanised dredges and beam trawls prohibited throughout site. Demersal trawls and seines prohibited within the site, except September and October where demersal trawls and seines are permitted within designated zone.
17. Stanton Banks SAC	Bedrock and stony reef	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile gears.
18. West of Scotland MPA	Burrowed mud	Full site	Demersal mobile and demersal static gears prohibited throughout site.
	Deep-sea sponge aggregations		
	Coral gardens		
	Cold-water coral reefs		
	Offshore deep-sea muds		
	Offshore subtidal sands and gravels		
	Seamount communities		
19. West Shetland Shelf MPA	Offshore subtidal sands and gravels	Zonal - Option 1	Dredges and beam trawls prohibited throughout site. Zonal exclusion of demersal trawls and seines.
20. Wyville-Thomson Ridge SAC	Stony and bedrock reef	Zonal - Option 1	Zonal exclusion of demersal mobile and demersal static gears.

Figure 2 Revised management measures in Central Fladen NCPA



Figure 3 Revised management measures in East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA



6 Reasons for Introducing the Fisheries Management Measures as Adopted

- 6.1.1 The 2004 Regulations requires that the Scottish Government identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of any reasonable alternatives to the plan or programme, taking into account its objectives and geographical scope.
- 6.1.2 The reasonable alternatives that were identified and assessed in the SEA were represented by an 'alternative option' whereby the protection afforded by the proposed management measures was extended across the entire MPA where this was not already the preferred management option (i.e., the fishing gears targeted by the proposed management measures are excluded from the entire area of the MPA)³³. This applied to 15 of the offshore MPAs whereby zonal (Option 1) management measures were proposed. At the remaining sites, only full site (Option 2) management measures were proposed.
- 6.1.3 As detailed in Section 5, the management measures that Scottish Government has decided to take forward following consultation are for 13 of the MPAs to proceed with zonal (Option 1) management measures and five of the MPAs to proceed with the full site (Option 2) management measures (Table 1). The zonal (Option 1) measures have been revised at the two remaining MPAs to increase the spatial extent of demersal mobile gear restrictions following advice from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).
- 6.1.4 At four sites (Central Fladen NCMFA, Firth of Forth Banks Complex NCMFA, Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount NCMFA and East Rockall Bank SAC), the proposed management measures that have been selected will provide greater overall potential environmental benefits compared to the alternative options that were considered for those sites. At three sites (East of Gannet and Montrose Field NCMFA, West Shetland Shelf NCMFA and Wyville-Thomson Ridge SAC), the management measures that have been selected will provide reduced potential environmental benefits compared to the alternative options that were considered for those sites. The measures being taken forward for these three sites were still considered to provide overall minor to moderate environmental benefits, and were considered preferable to the alternative option when taking account of other considerations, including socio-economic effects. At the remaining 13 sites,

³³ Scottish Government (2024) Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report [online] Available at: [Supporting documents - Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\) - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025)

the overall impact of the management measures that have been selected will be the same as the alternative option that was considered for those sites.

- 6.1.5 The implementation of the extended zonal (Option 1) measures at Central Fladen NCMPA, are expected to result in immediate overall **moderate beneficial** effects on the environment when considering the balance between beneficial and adverse effects. The intensity of fishing activity with the demersal gear types targeted by the management measures is high. The prohibition of demersal mobile gear from 55% of the site will remove the pressures associated with these gears and protect and support the recovery of vulnerable habitat and associated species, as well as also provide potential minor spillover benefits. There is also the potential for future benefits as the measures restrict new fishers utilising the area with the targeted gear types. The negative impacts on the environment due to displacement are assessed as moderate as the amount of effort displaced cannot be accommodated at nearby fishing grounds, involving fishing vessels travelling further to access existing grounds or new grounds being fished which will result in impacts on undisturbed areas. The grounds to which the activity is displaced to may also be less productive and thus require more effort per unit landed. Despite this, the overall benefit of protection brought about by the measures is likely to be significantly greater than the negative impacts associated with displacement.
- 6.1.6 The implementation of the extended zonal (Option 1) measures at East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA are expected to result in immediate overall **moderate beneficial** effects on the environment when considering the balance between beneficial and adverse effects. The intensity of fishing activity with dredges, beam trawls and demersal mobile gears (other than demersal seines) targeted by the management measures is high. The prohibition of dredges and beam trawling throughout the site, as well as prohibiting demersal trawling from 85% of the site will remove the pressures associated with these gears and protect and support the recovery of vulnerable habitat and associated species, as well as also allow for potential minor spill-over benefits. There is also the potential for future benefits as the measures restrict new fishers utilising the area with the targeted gear types. The negative impacts on the environment due to displacement and the potential increased fishing effort from other gear types that are not targeted is assessed as minor as the amount of effort displaced can be accommodated by other areas within the MPA, as well as nearby fishing grounds, some of which may be within the site, and which are already fished, thus having a community composition that is already characterised by fishing pressures. The grounds to which the activity is displaced to may also be less productive and thus require more effort per unit landed. Despite this, the overall benefit of protection is likely to be marginally greater than the negative impacts associated with displacement and change in gear types.

7 Monitoring

- 7.1.1 Regulation 17 of the 2004 Regulations requires the Responsible Authority to monitor significant environmental impacts arising as a result of the implementation of the plan, programme or strategy. The purpose of the monitoring is to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and to enable appropriate remedial action to be taken.
- 7.1.2 No significant adverse environmental effects were identified in the Environmental Report as a result of any proposed management measures and therefore no mitigation or monitoring measures were proposed by the SEA (Section 4).
- 7.1.3 It should be noted that NatureScot, JNCC and the Scottish Government are committed to continued data collection and monitoring under The Scottish MPA Monitoring Strategy³⁴. This sets out the drivers and direction for monitoring of the MPA network to ensure that appropriate information is collected to underpin assessment and reporting obligations. The strategy outlines the principles for prioritisation of monitoring efforts, how the data will be collated and data management.
- 7.1.4 The results of MPA monitoring will be used to inform future decisions on the ongoing management of the offshore MPAs.

³⁴ Marine Scotland (2017) Scottish Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Monitoring Strategy. Available at: [Supporting documents - Scottish Marine Protected Areas \(MPA\): monitoring strategy - gov.scot](#) (accessed 12/08/2025).

8 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The Scottish Government is content that the level and scope of the SEA is proportionate and provides appropriate evidence to inform the proposed management measures for offshore MPAs.
- 8.1.2 This Post Adoption Statement concludes the SEA process, setting out the ways in which the findings of the Environmental Report and the views expressed during the public consultation have been taken into account in the fisheries management measures as adopted.

Appendix A. Abbreviations

EU	European Union
ICIA	Island Communities Impact Assessment
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NCMPA	Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area
OSPAR	Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (Oslo/Paris)
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEIA	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
UK	United Kingdom

Appendix B.Consultation Questions

The full list of consultation questions can be found below:

Part 1 Proposed Fisheries Management Measures

This part of the consultation seeks your views on the following questions regarding the proposed fisheries management measures within MPAs in the Scottish offshore region:

1. Do you support or oppose the proposed zonal fisheries management measures for offshore MPAs?

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose

2. Do you have any comments on the proposed zonal fisheries management measures?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

3. Do you support or oppose the proposed full site fisheries management measures for offshore MPAs?

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose

4. Do you have any comments on the proposed full site fisheries management measures?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

5. Do you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA)?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

6. Do you have any comments on the draft Fisheries Assessments which have been undertaken for each site?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

7. Do you have any comments on the Strategic Environmental Report (SEA)?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

8. Do you have any comments on the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA)?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

9. Do you have any comments on the partial Business Regulatory Impact Assessments (BRIAs) for the fisheries management measures?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

10. Do you have any comments on the partial Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

11. Do you wish to comment on the measures proposed for any specific sites?

o Yes (progresses to Q12)

o No (skips Q12-31)

12. A) Do you support the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Anton Dohrn Seamount SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

o Support

o Neutral

o Oppose

B) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Anton Dohrn Seamount SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

o Please add your comments in the text box.

13. A) Do you support the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Braemar Pockmarks SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose

B) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Braemar Pockmarks SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Please add your comments in the text box.

14. A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Central Fladen NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Central Fladen NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Central Fladen NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

15. A) Do you support the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Darwin Mounds SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose

B) Do you have any comments on the full site measures proposed in Darwin Mounds SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Please add your comments in the text box

16.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

17.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for East Rockall Bank SAC under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B. Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for East Rockall Bank SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C. Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for East Rockall Bank SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

18.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

19.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Firth of Forth Banks Complex NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- o Option 1 (zonal)
- o Option 2 (full site)
- o Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Firth of Forth Banks Complex NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Firth of Forth Banks Complex NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

20.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Geikie Slide and Hebridean Slope NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- o Option 1 (zonal)
- o Option 2 (full site)
- o Neither

B) Do you have any comments on zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Geikie Slide and Hebridean Slope NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Geikie Slide and Hebridean Slope NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

21.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for North-East Faroe-Shetland Channel NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- o Option 1 (zonal)
- o Option 2 (full site)
- o Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for North-East Faroe-Shetland Channel NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for North-East Faroe-Shetland Channel NCMPA?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

22.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for North West Rockall Bank SAC under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- o Option 1 (zonal)
- o Option 2 (full site)
- o Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 in North West Rockall Bank SAC?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 in North West Rockall Bank SAC?

o Please add your comments in the text box.

23.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 in Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 in Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

24.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Pobie Bank Reef SAC under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Pobie Bank Reef SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Pobie Bank Reef SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

25.A) Do you support the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Scanner Pockmark SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose

B) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed for Scanner Pockmark SAC? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Please add your comments in the text box.

26. A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Solan Bank Reef SAC under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Solan Bank Reef SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Solan Bank Reef SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

27.A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Stanton Banks SAC under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for Stanton Banks SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for Stanton Banks SAC?

Please add your comments in the text box.

28. A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for The Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount NCMPSA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures options proposed under Option 1 for The Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount NCMPSA?

Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures options proposed for under Option 2 for The Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount NCMPSA?

Please add your comments in the text box.

29. A) Do you support the full site fisheries management measures proposed for West of Scotland NCMPSA? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose

B) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed in West of Scotland NCMPSA? To note only one option for potential measures is proposed for this site.

Please add your comments in the text box.

30. A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for West Shetland Shelf NCMPA under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 for West Shetland Shelf NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 for West Shetland Shelf NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

31. A) Do you support the fisheries management measures proposed for Wyville-Thomson Ridge SAC under Option 1 (zonal) or Option 2 (full site)?

- Option 1 (zonal)
- Option 2 (full site)
- Neither

B) Do you have any comments on the zonal fisheries management measures proposed under Option 1 in Wyville-Thomson Ridge SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

C) Do you have any comments on the full site fisheries management measures proposed under Option 2 in Wyville-Thomson Ridge SAC?

- Please add your comments in the text box.

Part 2 Amendment of the West of Scotland MPA Boundary

This part of the consultation seeks your views on the proposed amendment of the West of Scotland NCMPA boundary.

32. What are your views on the proposed amended boundary for West of Scotland NCMPA?

- Support
- Neutral
- Oppose
- Please explain your answer in the text box

33. Do you have any comments on the revised Business Regulatory Impact Assessment for the boundary amendment for West of Scotland NCMPA?

- Please add your comments in the text box



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