

**Flapper skate conservation – Interim protection measures
Meeting with Scottish Environment Link**

**MS Teams online meeting
29 January 2021 15:15**

Attendees

- Marine Scotland
- Scottish Environment Link

Meeting notes

- Marine Scotland welcomed everybody and went on to outline the background paper supplied prior to the meeting.
- Marine Scotland described the advice provided by NatureScot suggesting that the skate eggs are sensitive to anything that affects the seabed, this includes all fishing gear, aquaculture and development of infrastructure on the seabed.
- Skate eggs currently partially protected by a seasonal closure this expires on 1 April. Provision of an urgent MPA and MCO is currently under consideration and the boundaries proposed by nature scot are still open for discussion.
- SE link thanked Marine Scotland for the update stating that they are very supportive of all proposed measures.
- SE link posed the question, are we confident that the eggs are still there?
- Marine Scotland said that some of the survey work was done at the tail end of last year after the seasonal closure providing a high degree of confidence.
- SE link asserted that they see the current evidence as backing up the claims they have made over Priority Marine Features.
- Marine Scotland stated that they have taken precautionary approach in regards to the flapper skate as recommended by NatureScot.
- Marine Scotland mentioned that additional survey work and wider consultation will be needed in relation to permanent measures.
- Marine Scotland suggested that the aim is to put interim measures in place before the fishery closure expires on 1 April.
- SE link asked how confident we are that NatureScot have identified all of the areas at this site likely to have skate eggs.
- Marine Scotland stated that the rest of the site has deeper water and different substrate so is less likely to have skate eggs however additional survey would be required for the permanent measures.
- SE link asked in theory could the MPA be extended if skate eggs were found elsewhere.
- Marine Scotland said that this is possible but would be subject to other assessments in addition to environmental surveys.
- SE link asked about engagement with other stakeholders Marine Scotland replied that the timeline has forced them to engage with a number of key stakeholders.
- SE link made specific reference to the divers who had made the discovery and Marine Scotland advised that the divers have been in touch with NatureScot.

- Marine Scotland stated that they are happy for SE link to share the background paper with other stakeholders with the caveat that this is a draft document and subject to Ministerial approval.
- Marine Scotland said that they were keen to hear any additional thinking or proposals in relation to the boundaries for this site.
- SE link suggested that the boundaries are quite tight to other PMF in the surrounding area.
- Marine Scotland suggested that perhaps the map makes them look tighter than they are with hundred metre buffer in place and reminded SE link that the protection here is focused on the flapper skate eggs.
- Marine Scotland thanked SE link for taking the time to engage with us on these proposals.