

**Flapper skate conservation – Interim protection measures
Meeting with SFF/SWFPA**

**MS Teams online meeting
29 January 2021 11AM**

Attendees

- Marine Scotland
- SFF
- SWFPA

Meeting notes

- Marine Scotland welcomed everybody, thanking them for their attendance and then went on to summarise the background paper provided prior to the meeting.
- Marine Scotland continued that NatureScot had advised that the site in question is of national importance providing an outline of the NatureScot advice.
- Marine Scotland noted that the site is currently partially protected by a fishery closure which expires on 1 April consequently interim protection is under consideration.
- SWFPA made the point that at this stage they have been unable to engage with their stakeholders such that they are not in a position to provide information on the usage of the site.
- SWFPA stated that the feature needs protecting mentioning that they would like further detail on the proposed measures.
- Marine Scotland said that an urgent MPA was under consideration subject to ministerial approval. The order is likely to cover mobile and static fishing gear as well as the introduction of infrastructure to the seabed and aquaculture.
- SFF posed the question how deep is this ground? The reason for raising this issue is that diving may also exert pressure on the feature under consideration.
- SFF welcomed the measures as outlined by Marine Scotland.
- SFF stated that we support this as long as it does not set a precedent of urgent conservation measures being misused to achieve the aims of other groups. This point was expanded further with the suggestion that there should be a percentage cap on areas of national importance.
- Marine Scotland asserted that it had challenged the sites status of national importance and NatureScot had confirmed that this is a genuine case and we are unlikely to find similar examples.
- SWFPA raised the bigger issue of constant harassment of scallopers by certain groups.
- SWFPA Said groups are less likely to abuse conservation measures if static gear is also prohibited. We would also expect diving to also be prohibited at this site.
- SWFPA stated that based on emerging evidence flame shell and maerl sites are perhaps not that rare.

- Marine Scotland suggested that there is a distinction between the existence of flame shell and maerl and good examples of these species.
- SWFPA asked if Marine Scotland had information on site usage Marine Scotland replied that VMS did not provide good data resolution, additionally small boats are not covered by VMS. Marine Scotland said they would welcome additional information on site usage.
- SWFPA asked if we can tell members that static gear will also be prohibited. Marine Scotland stated that it is likely that all fishing activity would be prohibited.
- SWFPA said that they was encouraged by everything Marine Scotland had indicated in this conversation.
- SFF we need to have confidence in the process so that our members can share this.
- Marine Scotland mentioned that there will be a fuller process and additional surveys with regards to the permanent measures and everyone will have the opportunity to contribute.
- Marine Scotland stated that there is still time to provide additional information on usage and discuss boundaries of the proposed site. Marine Scotland shared a map detailing PMFs surrounding the site in question.
- SFF said that it is useful that there are an array of PMFs covered in the area proposed, this will help give members confidence in the process.
- SWFPA continued that this would effectively bring forward measures already proposed for the protection of PMFs which were expected anyway.
- SWFPA mentioned that the question of site usage is still to be further discussed.