

# Fact Sheet



## Draft Marine Bill

### What the Bill means for Environmental Groups

The UK has one of the world's richest marine environments. As an island nation, we are responsible for a sea area over three times larger than our land area, including cold water corals and rocky reefs.

Our seas are home to a huge variety of plants and animals, containing 50 per cent of the UK's biodiversity.

But human activities can have negative consequences for the health and sustainability of our oceans and seas. Activities such as fishing and extracting aggregates, oil and gas all affect our marine environment.

Pressures from commercial activities have caused a decline in a number of species, including porbeagle and spiny dogfish and even extinctions, such as the angel shark, in some parts of UK waters.

#### **Conserving marine habitats & species**

Marine Conservation Zones will be a new type of marine protected area, being taken forward in the draft Bill. They will allow us to protect habitats and species which we consider of national importance, more effectively - and over wider areas - than Marine Nature Reserves.

Varying levels of protection will be given to individual sites, from restricting certain activities, to "Highly Protected Marine Reserves", where no damaging activities will be allowed.

We will consider with stakeholders how much of the network needs this high level of protection to deliver the conservation benefits we are seeking.

The new MCZs will exist alongside European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Areas of Protection) to form a marine protected areas network. Existing Marine Nature Reserves at Lundy and Skomer will be converted into MCZs.

Our network of marine protected areas will help to halt the decline in biodiversity by including the full range of UK habitats and species, and conserving areas where there are rare and threatened species and habitats.

#### **Sustaining our sea power**

The creation of a new marine planning system will help us find space for the competing range of activities in our seas, to enable fishing, windfarms and gravel extraction to progress more sustainably. It will give coastal communities, marine users and environmental organisations a chance to really shape the way in which our seas are managed.

#### **A one-stop shop for marine management**

A new Marine Management Organisation – a centre of excellence in marine regulation and enforcement – will be created, providing a consistent approach to marine management and delivering improved data. The Bill will also give the new Marine Management Organisation the ability where needed to manage a

range of currently unregulated recreational activities, such as collecting bait, jetski-ing or scuba diving, through conservation orders.

### **Fishing for the future**

Modernised sea fisheries legislation will provide a much clearer focus on managing inshore fishing activities to protect important marine habitats and biodiversity.

New powers for the Environment Agency will lead to more effective and targeted management of migratory and freshwater fish stocks. For example, it will enable the Agency to better manage salmon stocks against their conservation targets and allow measures to be taken to protect the European eel.

### **Protecting our marine environment**

Much of the coast of England is of high environmental and landscape value, and two thirds has a national, European or international nature conservation designation. The introduction of new access rights over coastal land will be undertaken in a way that ensures appropriate protection of habitats, wildlife and landscape. A programme of measures to enhance the coastal environment will also be developed, to enhance the enjoyment of those using the new access rights.

Our seas are already showing the effects of climate change and with increasing use of the sea by many competing interests, we must make sure that the marine environment can cope with changing conditions. We have a duty to look after our seas for future generations.

Our proposals will raise protection and management of our seas to a new level, halting the decline in biodiversity to create clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. They will help us restore, maintain and enhance ecosystems that are resilient to the effects of climate change.

To view the draft Marine Bill visit:

[www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation](http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation)