

**NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND
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National Trust for Scotland calls for new marine safeguards and expansion of protected areas in election manifesto
Proposal would support tourism and a sustainable fishing industry

The National Trust for Scotland is calling for the expansion of Scotland's Marine Protected Area (MPA) network to protect and preserve sea life and help support coastal communities and economies.

Scotland's national conservation charity has outlined proposals for strengthening MPAs and Priority Marine Features in a new manifesto published ahead of the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary Elections on May 6, 2021.

The charity states that by introducing better management, protection and enforcement measures within [the existing MPA](#) network and reviewing the Priority Marine Features, the Scottish Government will allow Scotland's sea life and marine environment room to recover.

Currently, the Scottish Government has designated 37% of Scotland's seas as MPAs to protect marine wildlife, habitats, geology and cultural heritage, however, as Diarmid Hearn, Head of Public Policy at the National Trust for Scotland, explains: "These do not automatically deliver the protection people think they do.

"Designation in name alone is not good enough - for our MPA network to be effective, we now need to put in place appropriate management regimes for each MPA and - most critically - monitor and enforce compliance.

"A recent MSC report found that bottom trawling is only banned in 5% of the UK's offshore MPA and the Scottish Government's Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020 reported that only 9 MPAs have achieved their conservation goals.

"Our Priority Marine Features are meant to be protected by MPAs but many sit outside the network. Moreover, many are within 1 nautical mile of the shore and easily damaged by bottom trawled fishing."

The Trust manifesto proposes a complete review of Marine Priority Features outside the MPA network. Many of the Marine Priority Features which fall outside the existing protection area are within 1 nautical mile of the shoreline and sensitive to pressures such as

bottom-towed fishing. The Trust argues that this network should remain under constant review and be built upon in the future.

The manifesto states that: “An effective MPA network is a magnet for tourism. They are nursery grounds for commercial fish species and allow the repopulation of neighbouring fisheries. The resulting higher biomass of plants and animals contributes to carbon storage.

“Long-term conservation and recovery of our marine environment will benefit people as well as nature and our environment: coastal communities thrive alongside healthy seas.”

The Trust state that protections afforded by MPAs will benefit a sustainable Scottish fishing fleet.

“We believe it is possible to have a well-managed marine environment and a sustainable fisheries sector - as well as use the sea sustainably for other social and economic uses such as tourism,” continues Diarmid.

“The Marine Protected Areas network needs to be the foundation for this, creating a network where marine life can regenerate, ultimately benefitting all of Scotland's seas. A well-managed MPA network will deliver many benefits- it will help increase biodiversity and help recover ecosystems and habitats, ultimately leading to species recovery. It will help protect blue carbon stores and secure the ecosystem benefits our seas deliver us such as nutrient cycling and food.

“Scotland has one of the most extensive coastlines in Europe, with a myriad of islands, and communities with an age-old relationship with the sea. As we aspire to meet the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, better management of our marine environment is as important as meeting these challenges on land.

“We are now increasingly aware of how human activities can degrade our marine environment. We also now better understand what the consequences of this are, including the loss of fish stocks, the release of greenhouse gases, and the loss of some of the planet's most amazing creatures.

“If we allow our seas to be exploited and damaged, we are risking not only the loss of our amazing marine life and habitats, but also damaging our tourism and fisheries economies and the health of Scotland's people.”

The Trust is calling on all parties to commit to signing the manifesto, which proposes ways in which government can ensure the sustainable use and enjoyment of Scotland's heritage and landscapes by committing to election pledges which impact on planning, law, the economy and environment.

The National Trust for Scotland cares for some of the country's most significant heritage at more than 100 sites across the country, from houses, castles and properties, to landscapes recognised for their biodiversity, including coastal and island properties such as St Abb's Head and St Kilda.

The charity is currently a member of the Our Seas Coalition, an alliance of 90 Scottish organisations, charities and businesses which recently called for the reinstatement of a ban on bottom-towed fishing in Scotland's inshore waters to halt the chronic decline in marine populations and biodiversity and support sustainable and local fisheries.

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Editor's Notes:

The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.

From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, the National Trust for Scotland exists to protect the national and natural treasures we all love. To plan your visit today, enter your postcode at www.nts.org.uk.

We would be grateful if, when referring to the National Trust for Scotland that our name is not shortened to 'the National Trust'. We are an independent organisation, separate from the National Trust. The National Trust for Scotland is commonly shortened to NTS or 'the Trust'.

