

Wildlife and  
Countryside



## Marine Charter

**Wildlife and Countryside Link is calling on Parliamentarians to support the refreshed Marine Charter and champion an ambitious and well-managed third tranche of Marine Conservation Zones as part of Government's manifesto commitment to complete the network of Marine Protected Areas across the UK.**

**To support the Marine Charter,  
email – [marinecharter@wcl.org.uk](mailto:marinecharter@wcl.org.uk)**

**[www.marinecharter.org.uk](http://www.marinecharter.org.uk)**



## What is the Marine Charter?

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together 45 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife. Taken together, our members have the support of over 8 million people.

The Marine Charter is an initiative that seeks to reiterate the strong cross-party support for a representative and well-managed ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in UK seas by 2020. The Charter was launched in 2014 and by the General Election secured over 180 signatories from cross-party MPs and Peers.

The Charter's call is even more relevant today, and we are seeking more signatories in this Parliament on the refreshed Charter as the UK positions itself towards final designations to complete the network. Now is an extremely important time for UK marine conservation. We may never again have such an opportunity to safeguard and improve our rich, marine habitats and wildlife.

Support for the Charter will help ensure that UK Government fulfils its manifesto pledge of completing the 'Blue Belt' network of MPAs,<sup>1</sup> which is our best chance of protecting, conserving and restoring the UK's seas.

## What can Parliamentarians do?

- Add your voice, by signing the Marine Charter, to the broad and substantial constituency who support the designation of an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in UK seas
- Ask other Parliamentarians to sign the Marine Charter
- Support any local Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) if they are close to your constituency, and encourage local involvement in their designation and management
- Help promote effective cooperation between all UK governments, recognising that a well-managed ecologically coherent network of MPAs can only be achieved through all countries in the UK working together in a strategic and integrated approach.

Names of supportive Parliamentarians will be displayed on the website and may be used in other printed materials as part of the campaign.

## Why do we need a network of MPAs?

The UK's marine biodiversity is in decline. Urgent action is needed to recover our seas. A well-managed ecologically coherent network of MPAs is essential to halt, and then reverse, the alarming deterioration of marine habitats and species.

There is considerable scientific evidence, including from the Government's own assessment, Charting Progress 2,<sup>2</sup> demonstrating that marine ecosystems have declined substantially as a result of increasing pressure from human activities.<sup>3</sup> Equally, there is firm evidence that the establishment of effectively managed MPAs can bring about recovery of marine wildlife, whether measured in terms of variety or abundance of species.<sup>4</sup>

The network, if well managed, will also result in significant social and economic benefits derived from marine goods and services which will continue to be realised for generations to come. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment calculated the contribution of marine biodiversity in the UK alone to be £1.7bn per year. The Natural Capital Committee's second State of Nature report highlighted the key role that MPAs can play in fostering the kind of recovery required to ensure that the full benefits of a healthy marine environment are realised. For example, the report suggested that the restoration of marine fisheries to historic stock levels seen from the 1930s-70s, in part through the introduction of MPAs, could be worth up to £1.4bn per year of additional value.

A coherent well-managed network is also required so that we can meet European and international obligations, in particular the Aichi targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity,<sup>5</sup> wider coherence of the OSPAR<sup>6</sup> MPA network and Good Environmental Status by 2020 under the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive.



## Why is the third tranche of MCZs so important?

In 2017 the UK Government will be consulting on the third tranche of MCZs in English Seas and Secretary of State Waters; DEFRA has stated that this is the last opportunity to designate MCZs in English waters and thus the last chance to protect species and habitats in these areas that are so important to the overall health of our seas.

Although progress has been made across the UK towards designating MPAs, existing measures and current site proposals in England and Secretary of State Waters still fall short of the UK's commitments and the protection that our marine environment so urgently needs. The marine environment urgently needs an ambitious set of sites to help fill key gaps in the network.

The third tranche of MCZs is an opportunity to address current gaps in the network and ensure that there is sufficient protection for mobile species, such as marine mammals and seabirds, as well as seabed habitats. It is also an opportunity to restore balance to the designation process to ensure that ecological benefits are achieved, recognising socio-economic factors. Existing efforts towards the network have been undermined through giving too much weight to socio-economic factors and insufficient recognition of the important role these protected areas play in the recovery and sustainable management of our seas. The long term benefits arising from MPAs, especially the natural capital benefits and ecosystem services, are often overlooked.

## Effective management and protection for the network

The network must be well-managed to be effective in protecting and restoring our seas.

Government should have high ambition for the protection and recovery of sites through effective management, adequate funding and proactive regulation of potentially harmful activities, including cumulative impacts. This ambitious protection and management should include the following:

- Protection prior to designation for identified sites to halt further degradation
- Strategic and integrated approaches to designation and management across the whole UK
- Strong proactive conservation objectives combined with effective management measures
- An effective programme of monitoring that informs site management
- Recovery and enhancement of the site and its features
- Compliance, and where necessary, enforcement.

We believe engaging community and local stakeholders in site management options may help with future enforcement. These management measures must be geared towards achieving the conservation objective for the site, and must also have a legal underpinning. Voluntary measures in isolation have repeatedly been proven not to work and are highly time consuming and extremely expensive. Without some form of legal redress in enforcing these statutory conservation objectives, the good work and cooperation of many can be undermined, often irrevocably, by a minority, with no effective means of redress and create little more than 'paper parks'.

## Integrating MCZs with the wider network in UK seas

MCZs in English and Secretary of State Waters alone will not achieve a representative, well-managed, coherent network of MPAs across UK seas. The network can only be achieved through all countries in the UK working together in a strategic and integrated approach to designate and effectively manage sites.

MCZ designation is not the only mechanism for creating MPAs in English seas or sites that are part of the wider UK MPA network. The network will also be made up of sites of international importance (Special Areas of Conservation for habitats and species, Special Protection Areas for birds), and sites of national importance, such as existing MCZs, as well as intertidal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Ramsar sites. As such, it is vital that negotiations around the UK's future relationship with the European Union must not hinder or delay the UK from completing pre-existing processes across the UK to designate additional European Marine Sites, as well as designating additional MPA sites under the relevant UK Marine Acts. Furthermore, it is paramount that existing protected areas designated under European or national auspices maintain existing levels of protection for nature and are well managed regardless of the future relationship with the European Union.

Further information, including more detail on the benefits of MPAs and the development of the network, is available at [www.marinecharter.org.uk](http://www.marinecharter.org.uk). Follow this campaign on social media through #UKBlueBelt.

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## Support for the Charter will help ensure that UK Government fulfils its manifesto pledge of completing the 'Blue Belt' network of MPAs

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**Wildlife and Countryside Link represents more than 8 million people through 45 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife. Our call for an ambitious third tranche of MCZs in England and Secretary of State Waters is supported by 17 organisations:**



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See more at: [www.wcl.org.uk](http://www.wcl.org.uk)

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1. '[w]e will complete the network of Marine Conservation Zones that we have already started, to create a UK Blue Belt of protected sites' Conservatives Manifesto (2015), p55.  
2. Charting Progress 2, Crown Copyright, 2010, <http://chartingprogress.defra.gov.uk/>  
3. International Earth system expert workshop on ocean stresses and impacts. Summary report. IPSO, Oxford, June 2011; UK National Ecosystem Assessment, June 2011, <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>; Jackson, J.B.C. (2008) Ecological extinction and evolution in the brave new ocean. Proceedings of the National Academy of Science. Vol 105 suppl. 1 pp 11458-11465  
4. E.g. Lester et al.: Biological effects within marine reserves Mar Ecol Prog Ser 384: 33-46, 2009; Pérez-Jorge S et al: Can Static Habitat Protection Encompass Critical Areas for Highly Mobile Marine Top Predators? Insights from Coastal East Africa <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26186438>  
5. Aichi Biodiversity Targets: <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>  
6. OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic.