



June 2009

## Parliamentary Briefing

# Marine & Coastal Access Bill Amendment

### Mitigating the Impacts of the Socio-Economics Clause (c117(7)) when designating MCZs

The organisations listed above have been closely engaged in the Marine & Coastal Access Bill process from the outset. We are members of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Marine Task Force<sup>1</sup>, which has been campaigning for many years for the legislative tools to deliver improvements in marine conservation and management.

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) believes that subclause 117(7), the power to take the social and economic consequences of site designation into account at the site selection and designation stage, should be removed from the Bill.

However, if we cannot achieve the removal of subclause 117(7) from the Bill, it must at least be qualified so that it is clear that the first stage of the process, identification of important features that qualify for designation as MCZs, should be carried out using scientific criteria alone, while socio-economic considerations should be secondary factors in the designation process. Social and economic consequences of designation should not be considered at the initial point of identification as it may compromise the opportunity to achieve an ecologically coherent network.

The Marine (Scotland) Bill, currently being discussed in the Scottish Parliament is worded to limit the consideration of social and economic factors in designation of its Nature Conservation MPAs. The Scottish Marine Bill states that such factors can only be taken into account when there are two or more sites under consideration that are equally valuable in ecological terms. Link believes that consistency is both necessary and desirable between the UK Marine & Coastal Access Bill and the Marine (Scotland) Bill and there would be benefits in having similar provisions for nature conservation and in particular for the designation of a UK-wide network of marine protected areas that is ecologically coherent.

The UK Government has suggested that socio-economic factors will be considered during the designation of representative sites, whereas for sites designed to protect rare and threatened features, ecological and conservation considerations will be given more weight. Link believes that this should be clarified in the Marine & Coastal Access Bill. If it cannot be removed from the Bill, subclause 117(7) should at least be amended to make it clear that socio-economic consequences of designation may only be considered where there is a choice between two or more areas of similar ecological and conservation importance, and the omission of one site will not compromise the ability to achieve an ecologically coherent network of sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Wildlife and Countryside Link is a coalition of the UK's major environmental organisations working together for the conservation and protection of wildlife, the countryside and the marine environment.

Socio-economics should not be considered for sites designated to protect rare and/or threatened features and there should be a presumption for these sites to be included in the network.

*For further information, please contact*  
Danny Stone, Parliamentary Officer, RSPB, on 07989 502004, [danny.stone@rspb.org.uk](mailto:danny.stone@rspb.org.uk); or  
Hazel Phillips, Head of Public Affairs, The Wildlife Trusts on 020 78034293,  
[hphillips@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:hphillips@wildlifetrusts.org); or  
Saskia Hervey, Senior Public Affairs Officer, WWF-UK on 01483 412372, [shervey@wwf.org.uk](mailto:shervey@wwf.org.uk); or  
Melissa Moore, Senior Policy Officer, Marine Conservation Society on 07793 118386,  
[melissa.moore@mcsuk.org](mailto:melissa.moore@mcsuk.org)

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**Annex – Amendments**

**Marine & Coastal Access Bill**  
**House of Commons Committee Stage, June 2009**

Limit consideration of socio-economics in the selection and designation of MCZs

Clause	Clause 117(7) Grounds for designation of MCZs
Amendment	Page 79, line 9: at end insert—  “for representative sites in which the feature or features are not rare or threatened, and where doing so does not hinder the achievement of a network of conservation sites under section 123”