



Marine Conservation Society



Assessment of UK seas seriously misleading

Members of Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link), a coalition of the UK's most influential environmental groups, have raised major concern with the Government's interpretation of a comprehensive assessment of the UK's seas.

The assessment, *Charting Progress 2: the state of UK seas (CP2)*¹, prepared by the UK Marine Monitoring and Assessment Strategy community and commented on by the Government, paints a positive picture of the seas and marine life around the UK; a message that Link says is alarmingly misleading.

CP2 is based on a scientific evidence base, and presented using accessible and understandable visual summaries. However, following a detailed analysis of the CP2 report, the accompanying Overview report and the Government's commentary on CP2, Link found that important messages in the underlying data reports were often misrepresented in the summary documents, or were not reflected at all. And in a number of specific places, the summarised information and the Government's commentary on CP2 was contradictory to the CP2 report itself.

In light of these findings, and as a challenge to the Government, Link has produced a set of CP2 briefings, examining the evidence used and highlighting the discrepancies between the underlying data reports, CP2 report, and accompanying documents.

Joan Edwards, Chair of Link's Marine Working Group and Head of Living Seas at The Wildlife Trusts said, "The real worry is that going forward CP2 is to be used by the Government as the evidence base for the state of UK seas. It is also expected to form the foundation of the initial assessment required by the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which is due in 2012, and is already informing the evidence base for marine planning in England.

"Link is seriously concerned that using the summarised CP2 information to inform policy development will have major implications for the UK's marine life. In light of the importance of CP2 for future decision-making on the management of UK seas, we urge the Government to re-examine CP2 and the messages that have come out of it."

Dr Sharon Thompson, Vice Chair of Link's Marine Working Group and Senior Marine Policy Officer at the RSPB said, "There are some glaring errors in the CP2 report and its summarised messages. For example, again and again it fails to recognise that many species of seabird around the UK are actually showing long-term recovery trends from all time lows in the 1970s, following severe persecution and over-hunting. While documented correctly in the underlying Feeder Report, the CP2 summaries paint a deceptively rosy picture of the current status of many seabird populations by ignoring this historic context.

¹ <http://chartingprogress.defra.gov.uk/resources>

“Inaccurate and contradictory reporting would not be tolerated in any other industry or sector, and should not be considered acceptable when determining the future of our natural environment.”

-Ends-

For more information contact:

Fiona Llewellyn, Wildlife and Countryside Link

02078208600

fiona@wcl.org.uk

Notes to editors:

1. The Wildlife and Countryside Link briefings on Charting Progress 2 can be accessed at: http://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/2011/Link_CP2_marine_briefings_21Jun11.pdf
2. The Charting Progress 2 report, government commentary and background information, can be accessed at: <http://chartingprogress.defra.gov.uk/>
3. Wildlife and Countryside Link brings together over 30 of the UK's leading voluntary organisations united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of wildlife, the countryside and the marine environment. Taken together our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK.
4. Wildlife and Countryside Link's Vision for the future of our seas is for: “Healthy, well-managed seas, where wildlife is flourishing and ecosystems are protected, connected and thriving”. Further information about the Vision is available at: http://www.wcl.org.uk/marine_vision.asp

The Wildlife and Countryside Link briefings on Charting Progress 2 are supported by the following organisations;

- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- The Mammal Society
- Marine Conservation Society
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Shark Trust
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
- WWF – UK

**Wildlife and Countryside Link
August 2011**

