

NEWS RELEASE

Immediate: Monday 15 September 2014

UNITED IN MANIFESTO ASK FOR UK SEAS

As the Government's response to the Environmental Audit Select Committee's Marine Protected Area inquiry is published today, 19 organisations have come together on the actions needed to help UK seas recover.

Wildlife and Countryside Link's Marine Charter seeks to ensure that, ahead of the 2015 General Election, a commitment to complete the delivery of a representative and well-managed ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in UK seas is enshrined within party political manifestos. 120 parliamentarians from across the political spectrum have signed up to the Charter. The full list can be viewed at: www.marinecharter.org.uk

Chair of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Marine Working Group, Joan Edwards, commented:

"While the designations in English seas within this Parliament are a welcome start, there remains much to be done to deliver the truly ecologically coherent network needed. We need two more full tranches of Marine Conservation Zones designated early in the next Parliament.

"As the political parties craft their election message, the united and powerful call of 19 UK NGOs, along with 120 Parliamentarians to complete a full ecologically coherent network has to be heard. The next Government has a unique opportunity to help deliver a network that the UK can be rightly proud of, and in doing so restore the health, productivity and diversity of our iconic marine environment."

As an island nation, our seas and coastline have defined much of our history and our culture. We have some of the most amazing marine environments anywhere in the world. 100 years ago vast native oyster fields the size of Wales carpeted the Irish Sea. Huge fleets of vessels supported the ports of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth as they chased enormous schools of herring in the North Sea. Bluefin Tuna, now critically endangered, used to be abundant around our shores.

There is widespread scientific evidence, and acknowledgement from across the political spectrum, that our seas are not as diverse, healthy or as productive as they once were. The ability of our seas to cope with the pressures put upon them - whether overfishing, industrial pollution or the impacts of climate change - is in many places severely degraded.

The overwhelming levels of public, scientific and industry support for the timely delivery of this network have been well documented in recent years. However, one of the defining features of the landmark 2009 Marine Act was its overwhelming cross-party political support. The Environmental Audit Select Committee report again demonstrated the need for swift designation of a network. And Wildlife and Countryside Link's Marine Charter has demonstrated to the political parties that this cross-party resolve remains as strong, and united, as ever.

Ends

Contact

For requests to interview Joan Edwards, please contact Anna Guthrie at The Wildlife Trusts on 07887 754659 or aguthrie@wildlifetrusts.org

Notes to editors

1. Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together 44 voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation and protection of wildlife and the countryside. Our members practise and advocate environmentally sensitive land management, and encourage respect for and enjoyment of natural landscapes and features, the historic and marine environment and biodiversity. Taken together our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK and manage over 750,000 hectares of land.

2. The Marine Charter campaign is an initiative of Link's Marine Working Group which 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 2016. More information about the campaign can be found at: www.marinecharter.org.uk



Wildlife and Countryside Link
89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP
W: www.wcl.org.uk

Wildlife and Countryside Link is a registered
charity (No. 1107460) and a company limited
by guarantee in England and Wales (No.3889519)