



The way
back to



Living Seas

A report by The Wildlife Trusts





Grey seal off the Farne Islands, Northumberland

Welcome Seize the moment!

A unique chance for the UK to become a world leader in marine management

In 2019 the UK plans to leave the European Union. While it is important that we retain existing EU law through the Withdrawal Bill and anticipated Fisheries and Agriculture Bills, this departure is a significant opportunity to build on existing mechanisms and improve the way we manage the sea.

This would be a massive moment for our seas and their wildlife. This document sets out The Wildlife Trusts' proposals for a new UK Marine Strategy. This would guide how we develop industry at sea, how we fish within environmental limits and how we can restore our marine ecosystems so that we have seas full of fish and wildlife. All sea users would be involved in its development.

Our seas are threatened by pollution, unsustainable exploitation



Joan Edwards is Director of Public Affairs and Living Seas at The Wildlife Trusts

and infrastructure development, destructive fishing practices and, increasingly, the effects of global climate change. These pressures are altering the ecological balance, depleting resources beyond safe biological limits and jeopardising what we take from the sea.

But this can be turned around. A national Marine Strategy gives us the opportunity to change how we fish, how we extract resources such as aggregates, and how we manage planning at sea. With the right guidance and ambition we can create thriving seas and a strong Blue Economy – globally recognised and the pride of our country.

This would help to provide economic security and essential benefits for all citizens. And we could inspire a new generation who will love and care for our seas in the decades to come.

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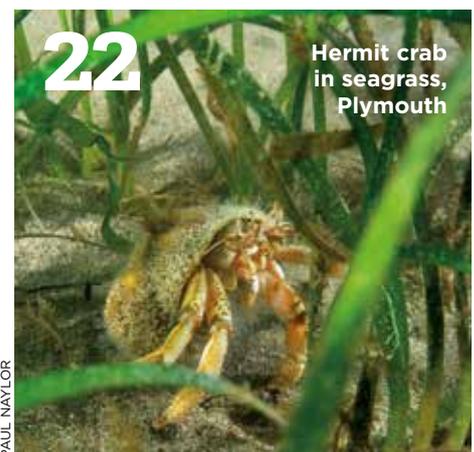
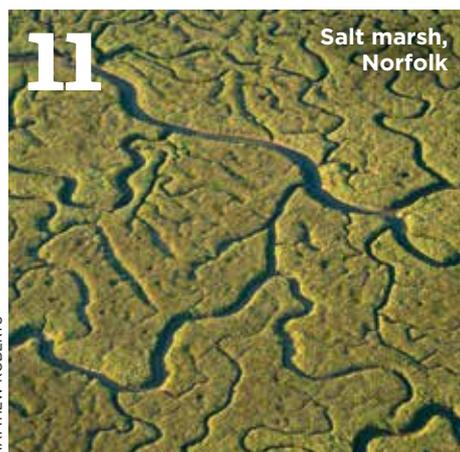
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Cover pictures, clockwise

from top left: *Actinia equina* anemone in kelp, Peter Scoones; lobster potter, Cornwall, Toby Roxburgh/2020VISION; otter cub on the shore in Shetland, Chris Gomersall; Lola and Vicky sea kayaking, Mevagissey, Dan Hilliard; Short-beaked common dolphins, Little Minch, South Uist, Chris Gomersall



Healthy sea

Healthy future

A restored marine environment underpins our economy and welfare

A healthy, wildlife-rich natural environment is not only valuable in its own right; it is fundamentally important for human health, wellbeing, and our prosperity.

Around half our wildlife lives in the sea. Healthy seas mean more fish and more corals. It means species which have declined becoming common again. It means thriving fish stocks and healthy marine habitats. Productive, diverse and resilient marine ecosystems are the bedrock of a sustainable society and economy.

Healthy, living seas also contribute to flood management, water purification, tourism and coastal communities. These benefits are often referred to as ecosystem goods and services. The UK Government has an opportunity to develop its own 'Blue Growth' strategy. Sectors such as coastal tourism, aquaculture, marine biotechnology and ocean energy have high potential for employment and growth, working within safe environmental limits.

“UK Government has an opportunity to develop its own 'Blue Growth' strategy”

Spider Crab
on rocky reef,
Thurlestone,
South Devon



Our key ask

The Wildlife Trusts believe the UK Government should act to safeguard our national resources and the recovery of our seas. It should embrace a new marine management system based on Regional Sea Plans and a nationwide network of Marine Protected Areas.

Restores Nature
 Recognises the value of the sea's natural capital and commits to its recovery



Involves people
 Inspires and connects people with the sea



Meets targets
 Results in measurable Good Environmental Status in all seas



REGIONAL SEA PLANS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE AND NATURE

Minimises harm
 Ends pollution, destructive fishing and unsustainable marine development



Plans long term
 Uses an ecosystem-based approach, meeting the needs of current and future generations



Stays sustainable
 Sets environmental limits for all activities at sea



Marine recovery in a generation

If the UK Government takes the lead on this new strategy, then within the next 25 years our seas will be more sustainably used and be well on their way to returning to their historic levels. This will benefit the wildlife that inhabits our seas, and the prosperity and wellbeing of local communities and the UK as a whole that depend on them. There is no time to lose.



A 250kg halibut landed at Aberdeen in 1963. It was probably 40 years old

80 years ago, tuna up to 386kg swam off Whitby

How it can happen

Regional Sea Plans

They can help us meet the needs of people and wildlife and live within environmental limits

Achieving the sustainable use of our seas requires the development of a new regional marine spatial planning programme. This should include:

■ **Wildlife areas**

A full network of ecologically coherent Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and wildlife corridors.

■ **Resource areas**

of low environmental risk where development might be suitable.

■ **Sustainable fishing areas**

for commercial fishing, where we set aside areas of the sea for fishing activities, such as scallop dredging.

However, all activities should be carried out within environmental limits and avoid sensitive wildlife areas.

Key



Fishing



Marine mammals



Recreational diving



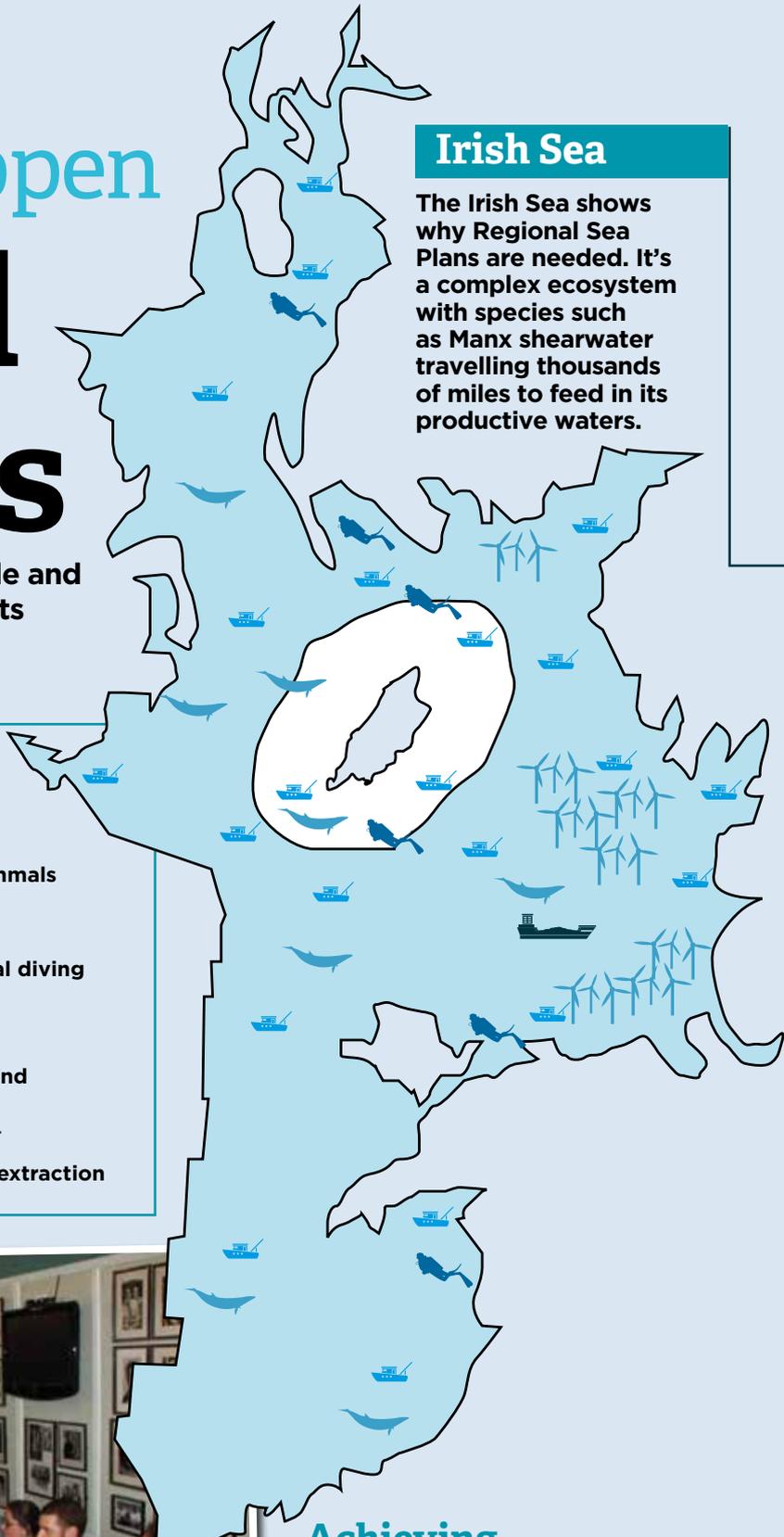
Offshore wind



Aggregate extraction

Irish Sea

The Irish Sea shows why Regional Sea Plans are needed. It's a complex ecosystem with species such as Manx shearwater travelling thousands of miles to feed in its productive waters.



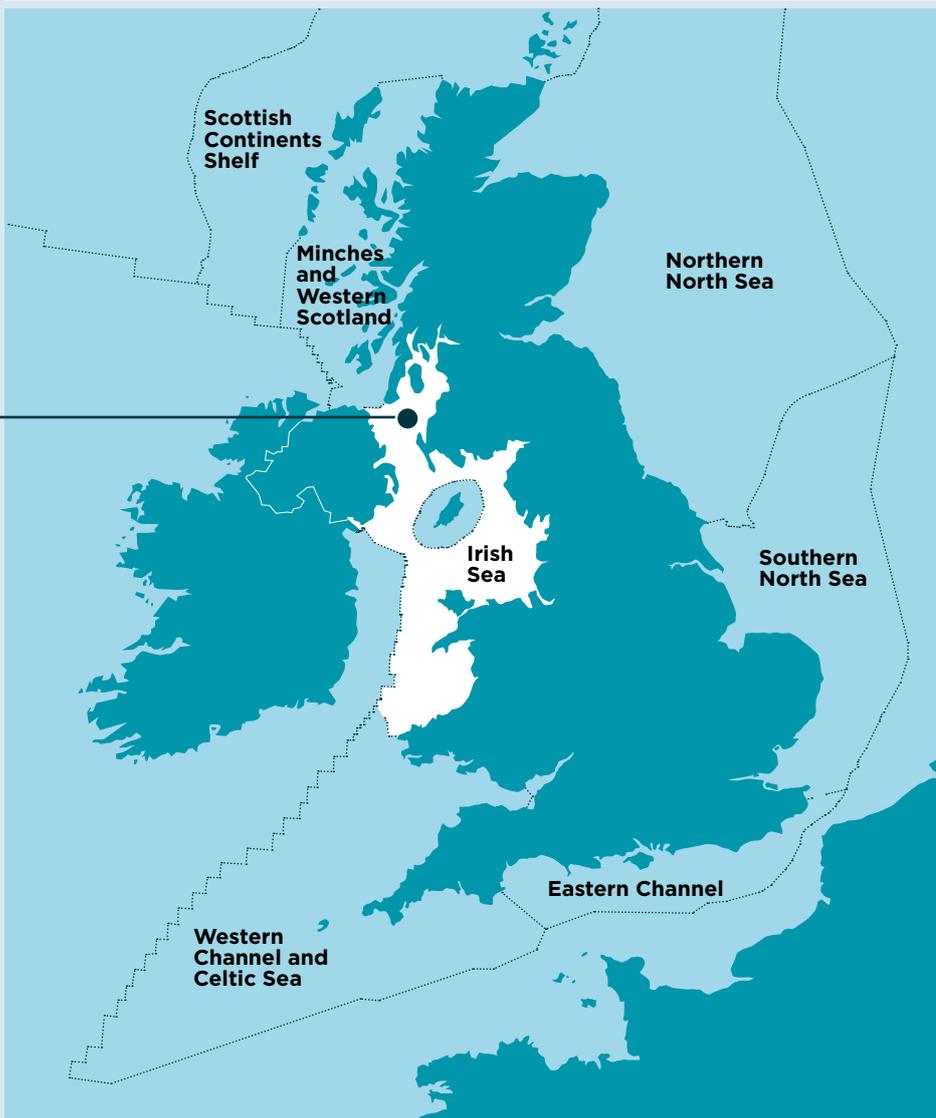
Regional Sea Plans would mean all stakeholders staying within ecological limits

Achieving international goals

The Regional Sea Plans approach will allow Governments to achieve the global goals the UK has committed to, or to which the UK is a signatory. At the moment failure is a real risk, as regards the UK's commitment to:

By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting (fishing) and end overfishing; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and destructive fishing practices; and implement

The UK's Regional Seas



MAVA PLASS

How Regional Sea Plans can work

The Irish Sea is a perfect example of the need for Regional Sea Plans. Shared by England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man, it needs to be managed in a joined-up way.

Its riches are under pressure from unsustainable fishing, shipping, pipelines and renewable power projects. A Regional Sea Plan would deliver sustainable use of its resources across five administrations, ensuring that its benefits are available for future generations. It would include:

- Protecting key areas from damage, including rich subtidal mud habitats, through a network of Marine Protected Areas;
- Identifying opportunities for development and sustainable exploitation of resources, including incentives for low-impact activities such as creeling for scampi;
- Setting environmental limits on all human activities. This would provide business certainty as industries such as offshore wind develop, and act as a driver to reduce all impacts;
- Inspiring all the communities around its coastline, connecting people with its plentiful wildlife, including humpback whales visiting in increasing numbers;
- Bringing all sectors together through the production of a common vision for the future sustainable use of the Irish Sea.

“Regional Sea Plans would allow inshore and offshore waters to be managed together”

science-based management plans. This will restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield (as determined by their biological characteristics);

By 2020, enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law Of the Sea, as set out in paragraph 158 of *The Future We Want*;

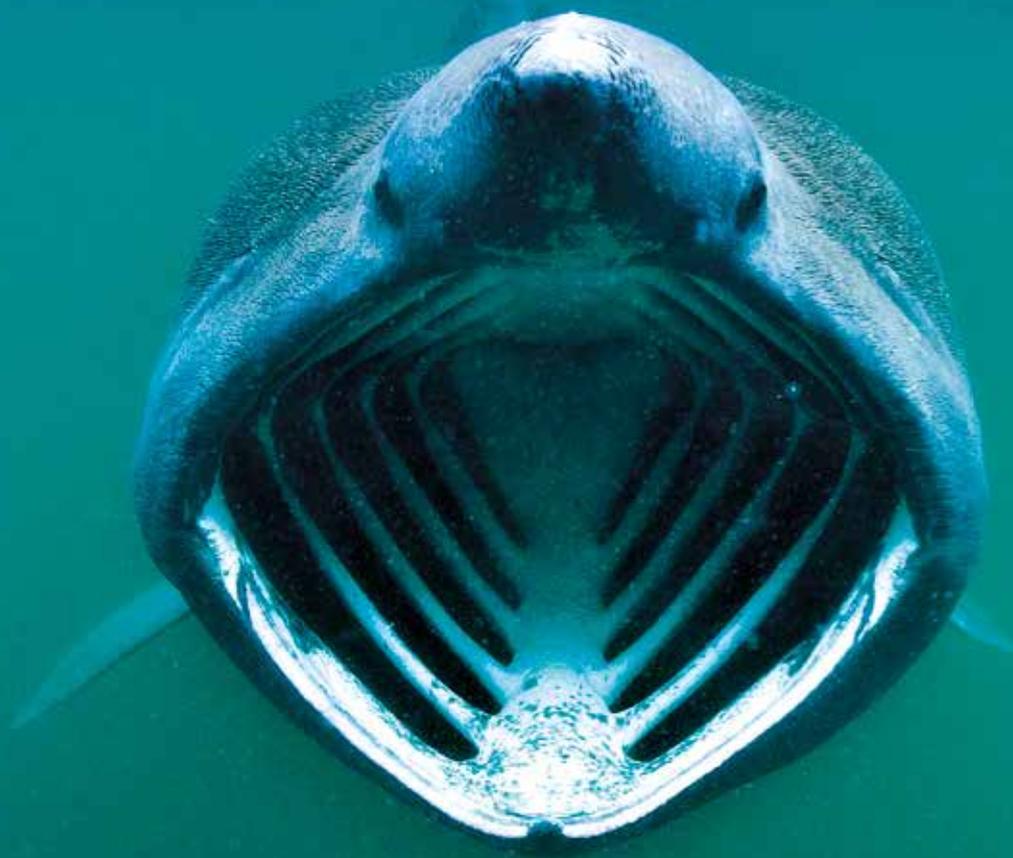
By 2020, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.

By 2046, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.

Regional Sea Plans would join up management of inshore and offshore waters so they can be managed together. New regional boundaries would be based on marine ecosystems and provide a sustainable long-term framework for managing our seas.

The plans would also provide a way to manage relationships with neighbouring countries, collaborate

Basking shark,
Coll, Hebrides



ALEX MUSTARD/2020VISION

“Regional Sea Plans should be the beating heart of a new UK Marine Strategy”

on international matters (e.g. migratory species) and resolve any disputes (e.g. on fishing rights).

In recognition of climate change, marine plans should include objectives and targets to continue to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement strategies for adaptation and resilience building.

Regional Sea Plans should be the beating heart of a new UK Marine Strategy. They would represent a world-leading approach to the management of marine and coastal activities. Based on a network of Marine Protected Areas they will enable the development of a thriving Blue Economy – here for people now and in the future.

We can do better

For example, the Marine Management Organisation is responsible for preparing marine plans in England. While these plans have made a good start in improving marine management, we feel that they have not gone far enough. Aside from not taking a truly spatial and forward-thinking approach, they don't adequately incorporate all the activities in the sea. Most notably, fisheries management is dealt with separately. We can do better.

Regional Sea Plans: a chance for the UK to lead the world

The development of a new, outstanding marine planning system will put the UK at the forefront of global sustainable development at sea. For a proud maritime nation this is the right place to be.

Making this a reality will require the research to establish baseline data so that future improvement in the environmental status of our seas

can be measured, with adaptive management plans for the future.

All stakeholders should be involved – from the people who earn their livelihoods fishing to wind farm developers to marine biologists. Most sea users rely on healthy productive seas so achieving good environmental status alongside sustainable use would be the approach.



The nudibranch *Flabellina pedata* on a red sponge. Selsey, West Sussex, English Channel.

Our seas are in crisis

Our marine environment has never been more threatened. It faces five critical challenges

Fifteen years ago, The Wildlife Trusts published *Our Dying Seas* to highlight the plight of our marine environment. Since then 100+ new Marine Protected Areas have been designated. But our seas are still in danger. The UK Government's first responsibility is to bank existing EU regulations as promised in the Withdrawal Bill. With that done, five unprecedented challenges remain:

1. Securing protected areas at sea
2. Making fishing sustainable
3. Ensuring development is sustainable
4. Eliminating pollution
5. Inspiring and connecting people

Toxic whales¹

The UK's only resident killer whale population has not produced a calf in over 25 years. An adult female which died in fishing gear last year had levels of toxic PCBs 100 times higher than the level at which they begin to damage health. Just eight whales are left.



The body of Lulu the killer whale was treated as toxic waste

Deadly nets²

2016 saw 205 strandings of whales and dolphins in Cornwall. Fishing nets are a frequent killer.



Basking shark trapped in gillnet

Pervasive plastic^{3,4}

12.2 million tonnes of plastic enters the marine environment per year. 90% of all seabirds have plastic in their stomachs.



Plastic kills 1m seabirds a year

Seabird declines⁵

UK, 2000-2015



JOHN BOWLER, RSPB SCOTLAND

1. <https://tinyurl.com/y7ovbcft> 2. Cornwall WT MSN report 2016 3. <https://tinyurl.com/yasif5zy> 4. <https://tinyurl.com/ybngx7yi> 5. <https://tinyurl.com/yb7akf3k> 6. Ruth Thurstan, University of York

Boom, bust, extinction: the story of the once-common skate⁶



After 80 years of over-exploitation, the common skate is commercially extinct in the Irish Sea. Many species' fortunes have taken a similar path

Key challenge 1:

Securing protected areas at sea

The UK has not yet achieved an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas

To achieve better seas for both people and wildlife, our Marine Protected Area network needs to be completed. These are areas where damaging activities are excluded.

Around half our wildlife lives in the sea and a full network should protect the whole range of 'typical' habitats and wildlife found in healthy seas, not just the rare and

threatened. The UK is on the edge of the coastal shelf which means we have an unusually high variety of habitats and undersea landscapes.

“ The network needs to protect the whole range of wildlife in our seas ”

These include cold-water reefs, seagrass meadows, kelp forests and sandy, gravelly or muddy sea floors. The network must protect areas for our 'ocean giants' – hotspots at sea where dolphins, whales and sharks gather to feed, breed and socialise.

At present protected sites are managed for their 'designated features' – eg rocky reefs, but not the sandy areas around them.



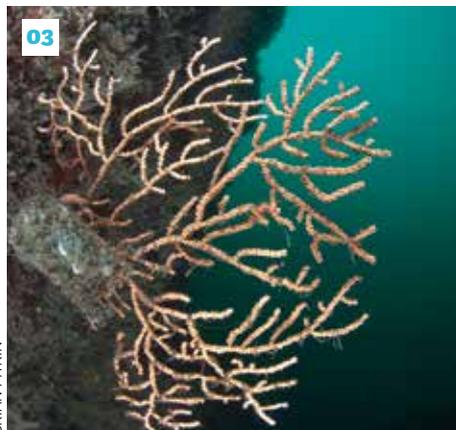
Two male common cuttlefish compete for a female (right), Torbay, Devon



PAUL NAYLOR



NWIFCA



BRIAN PITKIN



PETE MILLS

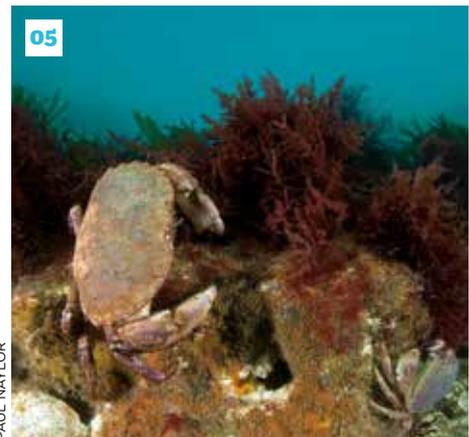
“The current approach is like protecting single trees rather than a whole wood”

A more efficient and evidence-based approach would be to manage these sites as a whole area. The current approach is like protecting individual trees rather than a whole wood.

Protected areas need to be close enough to avoid creating isolated ‘reserves’ at sea, but wildlife corridors between them will be important. MPAs would then not only protect wildlife inside their boundaries; they would allow growing populations to spill out into the surrounding sea. This has already happened at Lundy where fishermen have benefited from lobsters overspilling from the protected area there.

While some sites will remain open to certain non-damaging activities, others will need to be strictly protected. We need to establish complete no-take areas to act as

- 01** Sea hare on sea lettuce, The Needles MCZ, The Solent
- 02** Honeycomb worm reef, Allonby Bay MCZ, Cumbria. The worms build living reef structures colonised by a wealth of marine animals and plants
- 03** Pink sea fan at Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ, Cornwall
- 04** Ocean sunfish, Mounts Bay MCZ, Cornwall
- 05** Edible crab on chalk reef, Norfolk. The Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ is the largest chalk reef in Europe



PAUL NAYLOR

reference sites. These areas should follow the same criteria that apply to the whole network: large enough, and of sufficient number to monitor and learn from. This is key if we are to understand how protected areas can help our seas to recover.

Through the designation of a well-managed and ecologically coherent network of MPAs we could halt the decline of wildlife and habitats, and make the nation a world leader in sustainable management of our seas.

Healthy seas brimming with wildlife can increase tourism and help coastal economies to flourish. The bottlenose dolphin population protected by the Moray Firth Special

Area of Conservation brings at least £4 million per year to the UK economy, and generates more than 200 jobs in the local tourism sector.

In the UK, we do not yet have an ecologically coherent network of MPAs. Recent analyses of the current network by the UK Government's own scientists at the Joint Nature Conservation Committee have all

“ Growing wildlife populations could spill out into the surrounding areas ”

concluded that gaps remain.

Evidence from well-managed MPAs around the world shows they only work if they are sufficiently big, numerous, close and representative, and actively protected.

A first step would be ongoing commitment from the Secretary of State and the UK Government to designate a third round of Marine Conservation Zones. The first two rounds, while a good start, do not go far enough. Some areas which need protection have none.

We are on the verge of a world-leading network of Marine Protected Areas. The scene is set, the evidence gathered and recommendations made. All that remains is to finish the job.



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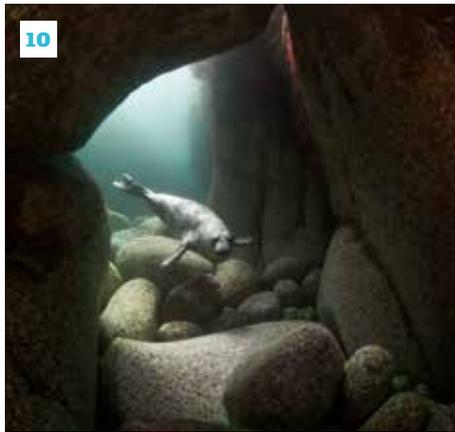
LISSA BATEY



PAUL NAYLOR

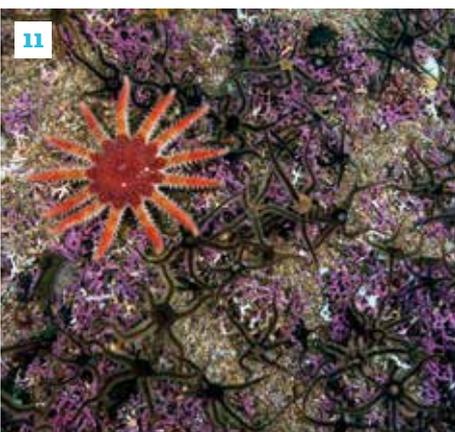


CHRIS ROBERTS

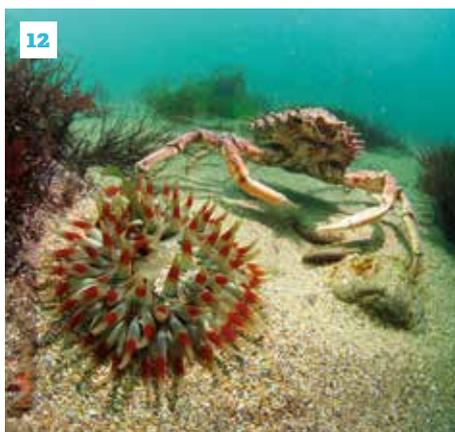


DAN BOLT

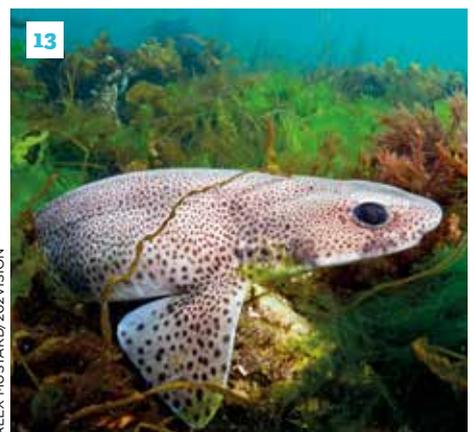
06 Fried egg anemones, Utopia MCZ, Isle of Wight
07 Common dolphins, Western Channel MCZ
08 Beadlet anemones, Gap Point, Isles of Scilly
09 Eelgrass off Swanage Pier
10 Grey seal, Lundy, north Devon
11 Common sunstar hunting brittlestars, Loch Carron, Scotland.
12 Spider crab and dahlia anemone, Thurlstone, south Devon
13 Lesser spotted catshark, Babbacombe Bay, Devon



ALEX MUSTARD/2021VISION



DAN BOLT



ALEX MUSTARD/2021VISION

What does an **ecologically coherent network** of Marine Protected Areas mean?

Protection of key marine sites from damage is important in reversing decline. But research shows that the ecological

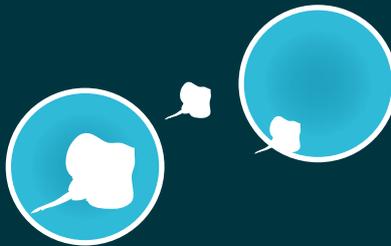
benefits provided can be significantly increased if sites are built into a network. In this case, the total effect really does

exceed the sum of the parts, but only if the network meets all of the criteria set out below.



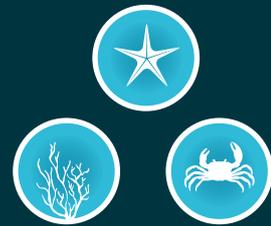
1. Site selection

Sites should be identified for their range of habitats and species. Consideration should be given to species and habitats that are in decline, rare, or threatened, and to areas of high productivity.



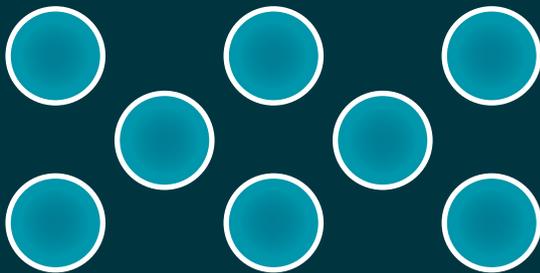
2. Connectivity

Sites should be well distributed, but close enough to ensure ecological links are maintained so that fragmented habitats can recover.



3. Representativity

The full range of habitats and species found in the geographical area should be represented within the network and an adequate proportion of features should be included.



4. Resilience

Individual sites should be large enough to provide meaningful protection, and replicated to ensure a resilient network.



5. Management

Each site should be managed to ensure protection of the full range of species and habitats associated with it. There should be no damaging activities.



Key challenge 2:

Sustainable fishing

Switching to a fully sustainable fishing industry would benefit jobs, consumers and wildlife

The long-term future of the UK's fisheries depends on a restored and healthy marine environment. Leaving the EU, whilst creating some uncertainty, provides new opportunities for reforming fisheries and marine conservation management in ways which will benefit both.

A vision for the future of UK fisheries must include:

- Fish stocks restored to maximum potential and sustainably fished, allowing stocks to thrive;
- Integration of ecosystem-based fisheries and marine conservation management;
- Aquaculture integrated with planning, with impacts assessed at an ecosystem level;
- Improved market for local, sustainably caught fish;
- Good trade conditions for fish and fish products; and,
- Support and promotion of low impact, sustainable fishing methods.

We believe the following measures will help deliver a profitable fisheries sector.

Rebuilding and maintaining commercial fish stocks

is at the heart of productive, profitable fisheries. To achieve this, sustainable limits to the amount of fish caught must be set, based on scientific evidence. Fish mortality must be kept below limits for Maximum Sustainable Yield. Measures to reduce, and eventually eliminate, discards will increase efficiency of resource use and improve the quality of data supporting fisheries management.

Flexible management of fisheries

needs to underpin delivery of all fisheries goals. In England, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation

Authorities (IFCAs) enable local solutions to fishery and conservation issues. Some IFCAs have developed permit schemes, enabling management to adapt rapidly to changing practices. These could usefully be rolled out to other IFCAs and the principles used in other parts of the UK. Effective vessel monitoring systems should be required for all boats in UK waters, supporting full traceability of products.



Cornwall's Good Seafood Guide helps consumers make informed choices

Ecosystem-based management

will be vital to rebuild marine natural capital and maintain ecosystem services. Wild fish, harvested commercially, are a major part of marine ecosystems and their removal in large numbers has wider ecological consequences. So it makes sense to manage our seas on an ecosystem basis. This means rebuilding and maintaining fish stocks, but also taking into account impacts on all elements of marine ecosystems, including food webs (from plankton to sharks and whales), habitats and non-target species. Fishing limits should balance the needs of wildlife and people.

Regional Sea Plans

will help deliver ecosystem-based management. The Plans would create a marine environment that can support the fishing industry into the future. With a network of MPAs

as their foundation, they should have social, economic and environmental goals, protect important fish habitats and identify 'go-fish' areas. Fishing methods which maximise social and economic gain while minimising environmental impacts (such as creeling for *Nephrops*, rather than trawling) should be prioritised.

Aquaculture

is important for the UK's food security. It must be integrated with planning for the marine environment. Ecosystem-level impact assessments should be mandatory before any development – not only possible impacts on local species and habitats, but the whole production cycle, including feed sourcing (e.g. no more catching fish to feed fish) and the sustainability of biological pest control (e.g. no removal of wrasse from ecosystems in Devon to act as a 'cleaner' fish in Scottish salmon farms).

Rewards for sustainable fishing

could support fishers reducing their environmental impact. An industry levy, like that which supports *Seafish*, could be redistributed according to how well fishers meet environmental and social goals. If all fishers meet the standards, the levy is fully redistributed and no financial loss is incurred and the marine environment is managed in a way that will enable future generations of fishers to earn their living too.

Involving everyone

who can help deliver sustainable fisheries management and monitoring is key. The development of Regional Sea Plans should involve all sectors of the fishing industry. The regional stakeholder groups established through the Marine Conservation Zones process are a good example of what can be achieved. These involved a wide range of stakeholders, including fishers, offshore developers, marine nature conservation experts and recreational users of the sea.



“ With an MPA network, Regional Sea Plans should protect important fish habitats and identify ‘go-fish’ areas.”

It makes sense
to take only
what the marine
environment can
sustain long-term

Key challenge 3:

Sustainable development

We need efficient regulators that manage a strong consenting and licensing system

The sea has provided our maritime nation with energy, food, sand for concrete and transport of goods. It has also connected us to the rest of the world – from the earliest days of exploration to the extensive seabed cabling that keeps us all online.

Our seas remain incredibly busy, with over 90 per cent of our imports and exports, by weight, transported by ship. Our coastal zone is vital for ports, harbours, sewage works and power stations, as well as being hugely important for recreation. It is 50 years since the first oil platform was erected in the North Sea. More recently, the UK has become the world leader in the development of offshore wind power and our use of wave and tidal power is increasing.

Achieving ecological sustainability of marine industries – existing and new – at a time when economic growth is considered the first priority is a challenge but one we can meet with the right approach. UK

Government should invest in the research and development of alternative renewable technologies. It is widely recognised that tidal impoundment schemes are using old and expensive technology and their environmental impact is risky and unclear. Wind turbines are widely used both on land and at sea, but more innovative renewable

“Achieving ecological sustainability can be met with the right approach”

technologies should be explored too.

In the long-term this is the only way we are going to continue to move towards our international carbon reduction targets while meeting our energy requirements, without further impacting our

“Working together is the right approach”

“Marine industries are essential to meet the challenges of Blue Growth and UK climate change targets. Marine industry is also quite rightly highly regulated to make sure that developments have minimal impact on the environment. We are working with The Wildlife Trusts and decision-making authorities to examine potential impacts, and using that information to look for better ways of working. In this way we can meet the needs of both the economy and the environment.”

Peter Barham, Chair, Seabed Users Development Group

already fragile marine ecosystems. To achieve this, we will need regulators that manage a strong consenting and licensing system, with Regional Sea Plans guiding what activity happens where at sea, and leaving space for wildlife..

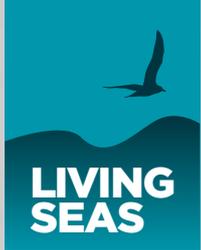
Decision-makers and regulators will need to make decisions consistently using guidance and scientific evidence, and engage with sea users throughout the process. Where development is deemed essential for the nation, compensation and mitigation measures will need to be delivered to ensure that development continues to take place within environmental limits. Monitoring is critical to ensure that mitigation is effective.

SeaGen's experimental tidal turbine in Strangford Lough was the first of its kind



SEAGEN, MAIN PIC: ROBIN COSGROVE

ment



Energy generators and wildlife need to be capable of co-existing for centuries



Key challenge 4:

Eliminating pollution

The means to tackle this multi-faceted problem need to be developed and implemented

Until recently most of the environmental impacts on our seas were out of sight and out of mind. This view is quickly changing as our coasts and beaches are defaced with millions of pieces of plastic, that will remain in our marine ecosystems for centuries.

Designated waters and beaches in the UK are increasingly failing to reach Blue Flag standards, with high levels of bacteria and litter posing a risk to human health, tourism and wildlife. A new UK Marine Strategy that meets targets for bathing water standards and tackles pollution can reduce this damage.

Given the wide-ranging forms of pollution, several strategies will be needed. These include:

Eutrophication

Discharges from sewage works can damage freshwater and marine ecosystems. To reduce this, river basin management plans need to be strengthened, and more sensitive areas designated. Nitrate and phosphate limits on agricultural discharges to rivers, streams and bathing waters should be required for all vulnerable areas.



Plastic pellets, or 'nurdles', gathered by Northumberland Wildlife Trust

“Plastic debris on beaches will remain in marine ecosystems for centuries”

Contaminants

A set of programmes needs to be designed to control and eliminate releases of contaminants including by strengthening river basin management plans.

Marine litter

Strategies need to include: improved understanding of marine litter pathways and trends; introducing sector-by-sector litter minimisation practices; efficient and consistent waste management systems; and expanded litter clean-up initiatives.

There should be a complete ban on microplastics in consumer and industrial products, including 'biodegradable' plastics. Regulation needs to be developed to ensure that producers adhere to the ban and regulate any incidents of non-compliance.

Noise pollution from development

This is a global issue and solutions are still in their infancy. We have no baseline information on noise levels at sea, or its effect on marine wildlife. There is no policy to reduce harmful noise, and very little evidence to support decision-making in relation to noise impacts. And yet some noise, such as percussive piling from wind farm construction, may cause death, injury or changes in the behaviour of marine mammals like whales and porpoises.

The UK Government should set a global first by implementing a

Regional Seas level noise reduction policy, establishing a national noise baseline at sea with limits for lethal, injury and disturbance effects.

Achieving this will require a long-term monitoring programme to measure noise levels and their effect on marine ecosystems. The existing UK Marine Noise Registry (collating noise generated by planned and actual offshore projects) must become an essential tool for monitoring data on this. This long-term research could be funded by a 'developer levy', to address the gaps in knowledge on the effect of noise, and establish effective management which meets the UK Government's legislative duties.

UK Governments' role in compliance

As part of a new Marine Strategy, the UK Government needs to put in place provisions to tackle the major sources of marine pollution. While education and awareness can make a significant contribution, enforcement and compliance will be fundamental to the final success of any planning and management system at sea.

Enforcement of existing legislation should be improved, especially measures relating to species and habitat protection and to litter prevention. With increased opportunity for remote surveillance, the ability to both monitor and ensure compliance with regulation is improving.

It is also important that prosecution is undertaken and appropriate fines are given to operators who break the rules.

A common dolphin and marine litter at Gunwalloe Cove, Cornwall. UK cetacean tissues often contain extreme levels of pollutants



“ UK Government needs to tackle the major sources of marine pollution ”

Key challenge 5:

Inspiring & connecting people



Every childhood should include this

The success of a new Marine Strategy ultimately rests on enough people in society understanding

Issues such as plastic pollution and whale strandings put the spotlight on our seas but public understanding of marine ecosystems remains low. This is despite the fact that over half our wildlife (more than 30,000 species) lives in the sea. There is still a disconnect between everyday human activities and the long-term impacts of our activities.

Increasing understanding of this is critical to the future of our seas, our marine wildlife, coastal livelihoods and wellbeing.

The UK Government has an opportunity to develop a new Marine Strategy which, through recovery of our sea life and habitats, creates experiences to increase people's enjoyment and appreciation of our

“ There is still a disconnect between everyday human activities and long-term impacts”

coast and marine environment. This is the key to inspiring action that protects and conserves our marine environment for the future.

The UK Government cannot do it alone, but with organisations such as The Wildlife Trusts and other active participants we can make a difference. In the UK, over seven million people spend time in contact with the ocean every year, including around 800,000 kayakers, 624,000 sailors, 518,000 surfers, 271,000 scuba divers and millions of swimmers.



A minke whale inspects tourists in the Hebrides

SEA LIFE SURVEYS/PLASHDOWNDIRECT.COM



Rockpooling at Constantine Bay, Cornwall

DAN HILLIARD



Children at Ambergate School, Derbyshire with their 'petition fish'

DERBYSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST



Toby meets two shore crabs

MATT SLATER

and accepting the need for it. That is why education and awareness are so important



Years of campaigning by The Wildlife Trusts and others finally produced the 2009 Marine and Coastal Access Act

The goal of The Wildlife Trusts is a society where people recognise and appreciate that nature matters; where we all:

- have a strong personal connection with wildlife and wild places where we live and work;
- benefit from a wildlife-rich natural environment - including better health, wellbeing and economic security;
- understand and value a healthy, wildlife-rich natural environment, and reflect this in our attitudes and behaviours;

■ take action for wildlife and wild places, to bring about nature's recovery on land and at sea - starting close to home.

Our vision is for seas full of fish and wildlife, with people proud of the positive environmental condition of one of our nation's greatest assets.

We believe a Marine Strategy backed by the UK Governments is the best way to tackle the many threats facing our marine environment and to put in place the management systems we need to set our seas on a course for recovery.



Summary

Because it's worth it

Controls on the way the sea is used can initially meet with resistance. But everybody has an interest in the sustainable use of a finite resource

We need to...

Value natural capital

A healthy, wildlife-rich natural environment is the foundation on which our economy is built and from which our society draws much of its strength.

The habitats and waters surrounding the UK provide us with a wealth of ecosystem goods and services. They help improve public health, reduce health inequality, strengthen personal development, create employment, increase community cohesion, generate profitable business and reduce the costs and risks of climate change.

These services stem from a variety of sources, from habitats such as saltmarsh which lock in carbon and protect us from flooding, to the fish we eat and the coasts we visit on holiday. Maintaining the health of our seas, recovering habitats that are damaged, and protecting species at risk – our natural capital – is vital to ensuring the continued provision of these services.

Set environmental limits

There is a limit to how much development our seas can sustain. We have ample evidence to show the long-term impact of human activity so it is important we set sustainable environmental limits – a baseline of what is acceptable and what the sea can withstand.

If we are to recover our seas' natural capital, and build that aim into policy and decision-making, we must never work at or beyond the carrying capacity of our marine ecosystems. We should always stay below it. The use of environmental limits means that industry can

develop in an innovative way, supported by monitoring technology providing data on the impact of all activities.

This ability will place the UK as a global leader in alternative technology for marine activities, providing new economic opportunities to be gained from our seas, in a sustainable way.

“ A healthy, wildlife-rich natural environment is the foundation of our economy ”



Hermit crab and maerl, Loch Carron, Scotland

Compass jellyfish
sheltering young
fish, Lundy Island

KEN SULLIVAN



Success story

Lyme Bay Reefs

The Lyme Bay Reefs are one of Britain's most spectacular marine landscapes – yet they were once in danger of complete destruction.

More than 300 species of plant and animal live here, including the nationally protected pink sea fan and the extremely rare sunset cup coral. These are accompanied by a host of colourful sponges, sea fans and starfish.

This underwater community is exceptionally fragile. Just a single pass from a heavy scallop dredge is enough to smash the corals and damage the underlying rock.

After years of campaigns, in 2008 a statutory instrument was implemented to protect 200 sq km of Lyme Bay from bottom towed fishing gear. While scientists estimate it could take up to 20 years for the reefs to recover



Lyme Bay

fully from dredging, a study by Plymouth University just two years later showed there were already signs of recovery. The study also found that potters targeting the closed area were benefiting from increased incomes and that visitors were having improved diving and angling experiences.

Lyme Bay was designated a Special Area of Conservation in November 2011.

“A study of the reefs just two years later demonstrated signs of recovery”

...and this happens

Good Environmental Status

The main goal of the UK Marine Strategy should be to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of all UK waters by 2020. We define this as ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive.

Good Environmental Status means that use of marine resources is conducted at defined sustainable levels, ensuring their continuity for future generations.

Recovery of natural capital

The recovery of our natural capital would mean that:

- Ecosystems are fully functioning and resilient to human-induced environmental change;
- Human-induced biodiversity declines are prevented and biodiversity is enhanced;
- Human-introduced substances and noise in the marine environment are compatible with the marine environment and its ecosystems.



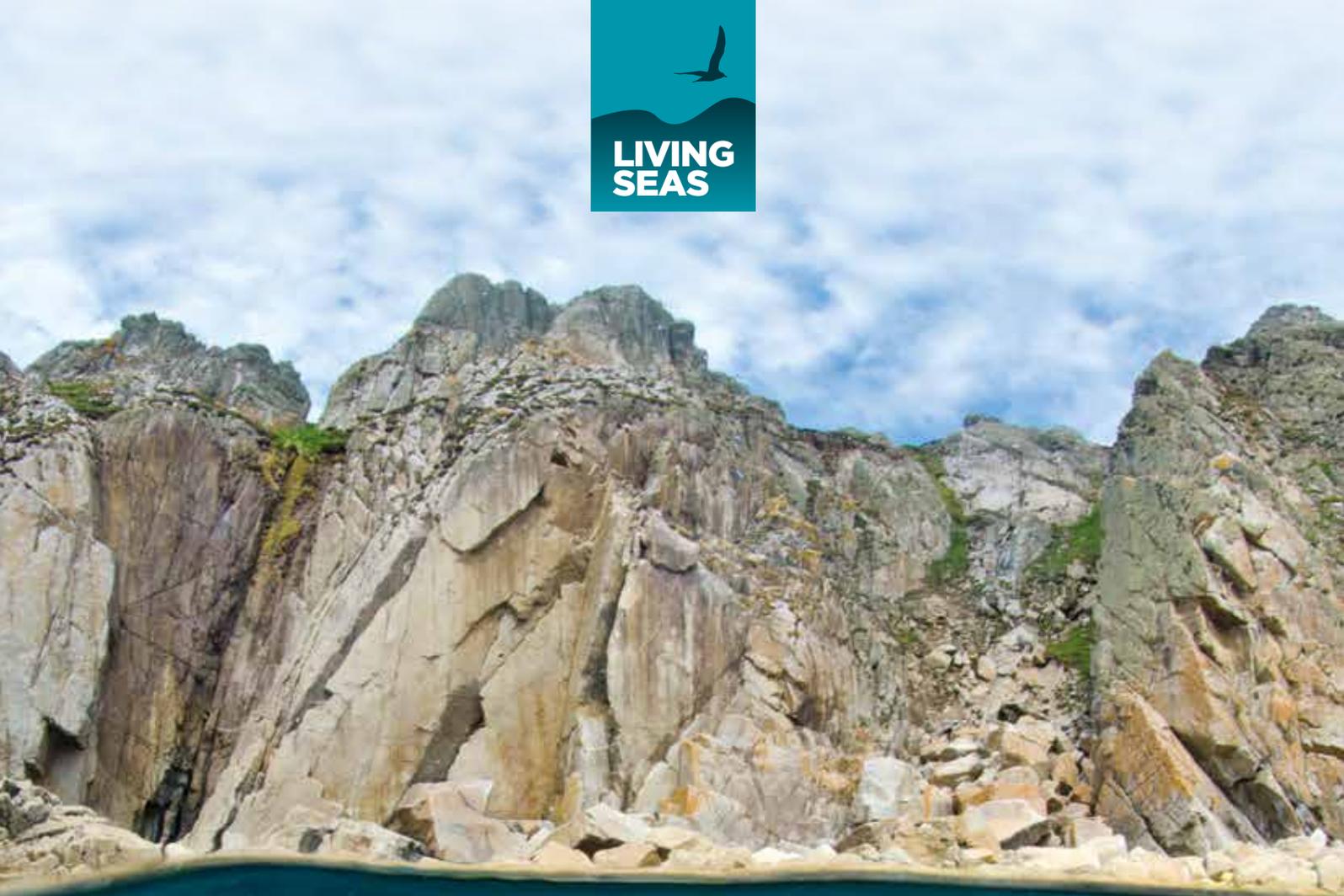
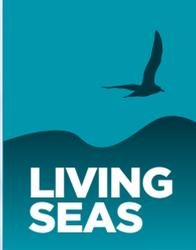
2006

Direct evidence of heavy fishing gear smashing slow-growing pink sea fan corals and other species



2017

Encouraging signs of corals in the no-trawl zone growing back to their former abundance



Grey seal beneath cliffs, Lundy Island

Talk to us

The Wildlife Trusts run marine conservation projects, surveys and campaigns across the UK. We are supported by more than 800,000 members.



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