



## News Update – 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2016

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### **FIMETI welcomes public consultation on Fair Isle MPA proposal**

FIMETI is delighted to share the news that members of the public are now being asked to give their views on the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA proposal as part of a public consultation which opened on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2016.

The consultation is the Scottish Government's means of gauging public opinion. We have worked very hard to get to this stage but a strong response in favour is needed to demonstrate support. We urge you to send that message by engaging in the consultation. It is not very long or complicated.

Please follow <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/marine-conservation/fair-isle-demonstration-and-research> if you wish to respond to the public consultation by May 24<sup>th</sup> 2016.

If you would like to find out a little more please take a few minutes to watch our [short film](#) on the Fair Isle Marine Protected Area at the following link - <https://vimeo.com/157135778>.



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We also have some **Q&A's** for more background information on it all -

**What is a Demonstration & Research MPA?**

This is a different kind of MPA from the other Nature Conservation MPAs recently designated across Scotland's seas. Demonstration and Research MPAs are not built around specific biodiversity features but are targeted toward demonstrating and/or carrying out research on sustainable methods of marine management or exploitation.

If you would like to read more about Demonstration & Research MPAs from the Marine Scotland webpage you can follow [this link](#) .

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/mpaguidelines>

**What is the Fair Isle Demonstration & Research MPA focused on?**

For Fair Isle, there is a dual focus behind the MPA; to establish robust research focused on migratory sea bird populations and to demonstrate the socio-economic value of a healthy marine environment to the Fair Isle community, and other stakeholders.

**What exactly are the socio-economic aspects which the Fair Isle MPA proposal focuses on?**

The research within the MPA seeks to establish the many ways in which the Fair Isle community, and others, rely upon a healthy and fully functioning marine environment. It also seeks to establish a clear picture of the socio-economic costs and benefits that MPA status can actually bring for the local community and others, particularly based on Fair Isle's status as a peripheral island community.

The active engagement of the entire Fair Isle community in driving forward the proposal for a MPA makes it a particularly valid location for studying the socio-economic benefits that community-led marine protection can provide. The very high level of support within the community is expected to result in a high degree of access and co-operation for a socio-economic study.

**What exactly are the ecological aspects which the Fair Isle MPA proposal focuses on?**

The waters around Fair Isle support globally important migratory seabird populations, but unfortunately many have been in decline over the last several decades. The proposed MPA therefore seeks to explore the various influences on seabird populations on Fair Isle, particularly climate change impacts and direct human influences. It aims to achieve this through conducting research within the waters out to 5km around Fair Isle, on the status, threats and responses of seabird populations and their prey species.

Fair Isle's geographic location accounts for the great variety of bird species recorded on the island (numbering nearly four hundred) largely as a result of drift migration. However, several of Fair Isle's seabird populations have experienced dramatic population declines since the 1990s e.g. kittiwake, shag, arctic skua, puffin, razorbill, guillemot and arctic tern.

Seventeen species of seabirds breed on Fair Isle, and in the 1980s and 1990s, around a quarter of a million birds would be present in summer. By 2010, this had declined to a little over 100,000. It is crucial to ensure that key prey species are not further depleted and to ensure the ongoing persistence of important populations of seabirds for which Fair Isle is renowned.

## FAIR ISLE MARINE ENVIRONMENT & TOURISM INITIATIVE

Beyond seabirds, of course there are many other anticipated long-term ecological dimensions to the proposed MPA. For example, Fair Isle lies in the path of the North Atlantic Current as it bends southeastwards to enter the North Sea and thus it is in a particularly strategic location for monitoring impacts of climate change across a range of marine biota, and for assessing adaptive responses.

Fair Isle's relative isolation from known pressures on the marine resource makes it an interesting and particularly strategic site to study climate change, not only because it is a key site within the British Isles for experiencing changes in the North Atlantic Current, but because its comparative isolation enables better differentiation between the effects of climate change and those of other human activities.

### **Why does the community on Fair Isle wish to see the Demonstration & Research MPA in place?**

The community on Fair Isle has recognised that over time there have been environmental changes around the isle. Therefore we would like to see a local management framework in place so that we can better understand these changes, then seek to mitigate their impacts. A Demonstration & Research MPA around Fair Isle would provide us with a stronger role in the sustainable use of the waters around the isle. Without some mechanism or rights to intervene we fear there is a risk that of our visiting seabird populations, and also our tourism economy which is so dependent upon them, will continue to decline.

As well as this the MPA gives the community the opportunity to pioneer an important example of collaborative management within Scottish seas - with a partnership of the community, commercial fishermen, research institutes and others all on board. We already have well established maritime research elements already in place and local facilities available; working in partnership with others on the MPA will allow data sets like these to contribute to further investigations.

### **Is there not already a Special Protected Area (SPA) for birds in place?**

Out to 2km from the island there is currently a designated SPA for seabirds but unfortunately there are no management or research plans in place within this site. FIMETI believes that the boundary of the proposed Demonstration & Research MPA, initially for research purposes, should go beyond this 2km SPA boundary as a tool for enhanced protection and to allow the option of developing broader, more experimental research and management measures.

### **What does the proposed Demonstration & Research MPA mean for fishing in the area?**

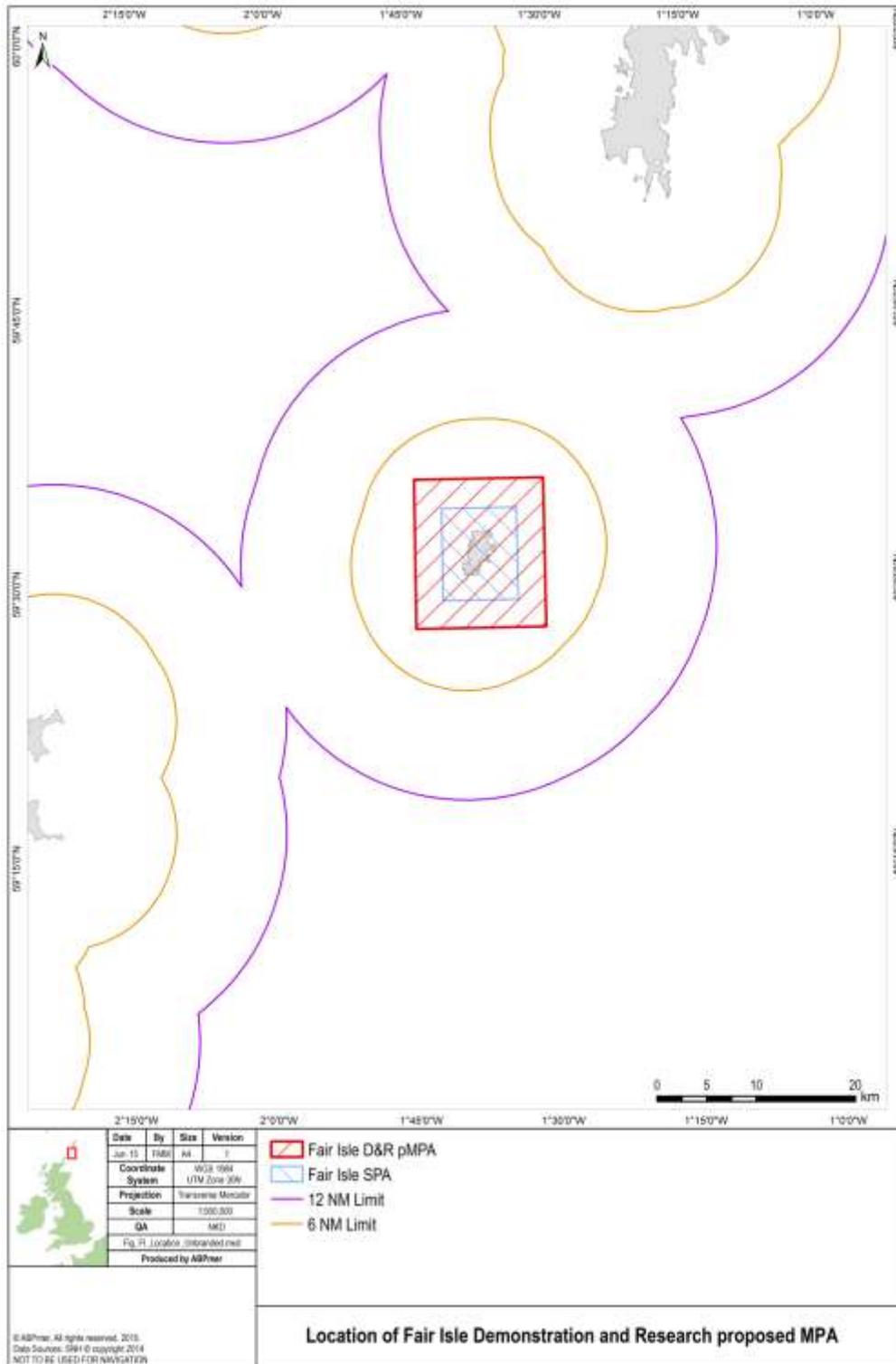
FIMETI and the whole community of Fair Isle recognise that the fishing industry is vital to Shetland and Scotland and want it to survive and prosper into the future. After developing and undertaking adequate research and monitoring programmes, in partnership with all stakeholders, potential future spatial measures which may be required as part of the demonstration and research will then be assessed.

### **How will the research and demonstration activities within the MPA actually be delivered?**

The project brings with it a substantial level of research already in place and active over a long period of time. This provides a strong initial baseline for carrying the primary research element of the MPA forward. To aid in this FIMETI, in partnership with the other MPA stakeholders have already established an MPA Steering Committee and, if successful with designation, one of the first steps will

## FAIR ISLE MARINE ENVIRONMENT & TOURISM INITIATIVE

be the appointment of an MPA project officer whose remit will include establishing a partnership approach to achieve and deliver on the objectives outlined in the proposal.





## Media release

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# Fair Isle community welcomes public consultation on its proposal for a new marine protected area

**1 March 2016** – Members of the public are being asked to give their views on a proposal for a new marine protected area (MPA) as part of a public consultation opening today.

The proposal has been developed by the Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI) on behalf of all residents of the isle, and other MPA stakeholders, and asks for the designation of a Demonstration and Research MPA. This kind of MPA differs from the other nature conservation MPAs recently designated within Scotland's seas in that it would not be built around specific biodiversity features but rather would be targeted toward demonstrating or carrying out research on sustainable methods of marine management.

If designated, the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA would be the first of its kind in Scotland.

Richard Luxmoore, Senior Nature Conservation Adviser for the National Trust for Scotland, explains, "The designation would provide an opportunity for Scotland to demonstrate the value of this novel and innovative form of marine protection to the wider world."



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FIMETI, set up in 1995, is a partnership between the Fair Isle community, the National Trust for Scotland and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust. The initiative was established to work toward the long-term protection and sustainable management of the seas around the isle. FIMETI originally submitted the MPA proposal to Marine Scotland (the government department responsible for the management of Scotland's seas) in December 2011.

The public consultation marks a major milestone for FIMETI, and for sustainable marine management in the area. Speaking about the news, FIMETI's coordinator Nick Riddiford said, "I am delighted that

## FAIR ISLE MARINE ENVIRONMENT & TOURISM INITIATIVE

25 years of community effort to safeguard our seas has reached this milestone. Its goal as the first Demonstration and Research MPA in Scotland is to pilot a partnership approach towards sustainable marine management of benefit to all.

“The sea plays a huge role in the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the isle. The designation would make a big difference for Fair Isle.”



There is a dual focus behind the Fair Isle MPA proposal; to establish robust research focused on migratory sea bird population decline and to demonstrate the social and economic value of a healthy marine environment to the Fair Isle community and other stakeholders.

The whole community of Fair Isle recognises that the fishing industry is vital to both Shetland and Scotland, and wants it to survive and prosper into the future; therefore a partnership approach is built into the fabric of the proposal.

Speaking on behalf of the Shetland Fishermen’s Association, Leslie Tait added “We’re quite happy to be part of the steering committee to investigate and come forward with ideas and proposals, but also to listen to others.”

Therefore as well as the ecological and socio-economic values the MPA is anticipated to bring, it also has the potential to be an important example of collaborative management within Scottish seas - with the community, commercial fishermen, research institutes and many others all on board.”

Fiona Mitchell, Fair Isle Community Councillor, emphasised the importance of the public consultation, saying, “The Fair Isle community has long advocated an MPA and we are delighted to see it move into the next stage of public consultation. Thanks to islanders, supporters, and new alliances with fishermen, this is an aspiration that has become a reality.”

- Please respond to the public consultation by visiting <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/marine-conservation/fair-isle-demonstration-and-research>
- To watch a short film on the MPA please visit <https://vimeo.com/157135778>
- For more information surrounding the proposal please visit [www.fimeti.org.uk](http://www.fimeti.org.uk)
- Also - <http://www.shetlandtimes.co.uk/2016/03/01/unique-approach-to-proposed-marine-protection-area>