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**Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
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Comataidh Atharrachadh Clìomaid is Ath-leasachaidh
Fearann**

**Development and implementation of
Regional Marine Plans in Scotland:
final report (December 2020)**



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Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.



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Background to the inquiry

1. Terrestrial planning has been developing in Scotland for decades. In contrast, planning in the marine environment is a relatively new concept.
2. The [Marine \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) (the Act) was heralded as “a [new era for the management of Scotland's seas](#)”. The Act provided a duty to prepare and adopt a National Marine Plan. Regional Marine Plans may also be developed, however there is no legal duty to do so. The [National Marine Plan](#) was published in 2015 and set the wider context for planning within Scotland, including what should be considered when creating local, regional marine plans.
3. In June 2019, as part of its programme of work on the marine environment and nearly a decade on from the Act, the Committee agreed to explore issues arising from the review of the National Marine Plan; this included progress in the development and implementation of Regional Marine Plans.
4. The [EU Framework Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning 2014/89/EU](#) set a framework for the production of marine plans and many nations are now developing marine planning systems.
5. In undertaking this inquiry, the Committee examined the first two Regional Marine Plans - in [Shetland](#) and [Clyde](#) - and considered the progress of the third Regional Marine Plan under development in [Orkney](#). It also looked for international comparisons (provided in the Committee's commissioned research conducted by the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology ([MAST-S](#))).

Timeline to the inquiry

6. The Committee—

- held a round table session in public on 11 June 2019 which referenced marine planning;
- issued an open call for views;
- conducted fact-finding visits and informal meetings with stakeholders in Shetland, Orkney and the Clyde and then with Marine Scotland in November 2019;
- published an interim report (June 2020);
- issued a targeted call for views following publication of the report; and
- commissioned research on international approaches to marine planning (*Using marine planning to balance competing demands on the marine environment: international comparisons*); and
- held an evidence session with the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment and Scottish Government officials.

Call for views

7. The open call for views can be found [here](#) .

Interim report

8. The Committee published its [interim report](#) on 26 June 2020. The report set out the work of the Committee to that date, summarising—
- the written evidence received from the call for views;
 - the themes emerging from the fact-finding visits undertaken in November 2019; and
 - the key outstanding questions to be addressed.

Views of stakeholders on issues and questions

9. The report was issued to the Scottish Government and to key stakeholders with a covering letter seeking views on the themes, issues and questions identified in the report.
10. The targeted call for views can be found [here](#) .

Response from the Scottish Government

11. The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment responded to the report—

” I would be keen for Marine Scotland to commission an assessment on the current status and future options for regional marine planning. In doing so I would wish that such an assessment would take into account and seek to address the Committee's findings to-date. I would also invite the Committee's input on the scoping of the work to ensure that it is aligned as far as possible with the inquiry.

12. The letter from the Minister and the Convener's response is at Annexe C.

Commissioned research

13. To complement the views of stakeholders, the Committee commissioned academic research on international approaches to marine planning covering—

- approaches to spatial management of marine activities.
- the role of marine planning in delivering protection and enhancement of the marine environment and associated policy levers.
- finance and resource for marine planning.
- marine planning and scientific expertise.

14. The researchers provided an informal briefing to the Committee on 10 November 2020.

Scottish Government response

15. The Committee took evidence from the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment at its meeting on [1 December 2020](#) .

Recommendations

16. In compiling its interim report, the Committee found that issues fell broadly into four 'themes'. It has discussed these four themes in its interim report and used these to guide its final conclusions—
 - Theme 1: Membership and governance of Marine Planning Partnerships.
 - Theme 2: Scope and expectations of Marine Planning Partnerships and Regional Marine Plans.
 - Theme 3: Finance, resources and expertise.
 - Theme 4: Community and stakeholder engagement.
17. The recommendations are set out under these themes.

Overall progress on the development of Regional Marine Plans

18. Three Marine Planning Partnerships have been established in Shetland (2016), Clyde (2017) and Orkney (2020). Regional Marine Plans are currently being developed by these MPPs. No statutory Regional Marine Plans have been published to date.
19. A common theme emerging from evidence gathered by the Committee was dissatisfaction among stakeholders over slow progress in establishing Marine Planning Partnerships and the development of Regional Marine Plans. Evidence cited a lack of human, financial and political support.
20. However, the Committee's commissioned research found that timescales for developing marine plans in Scotland are broadly comparable to international examples. This research also found that both local and national leadership was important in places such as Norway and New Zealand in delivering successful outcomes from marine planning.
21. The Committee recognises that marine planning is a complex process that is still in its infancy in Scotland and it will take time to develop Regional Marine Plans. However, the Committee is concerned that leadership and guidance from central government and Marine Scotland is lacking, leading to the perception among stakeholders that regional marine planning is losing momentum.
22. The Committee is also concerned that the absence of regional marine planning in regions where marine developments such as offshore wind, aquaculture and marine tourism are expanding, may lead to missed opportunities in engaging coastal communities and other affected communities and stakeholders. The Committee is not clear on the priorities of the Scottish Government and its desired outcomes for future implementation of regional marine planning.

The Committee considers that political leadership is key to delivering effective outcomes from marine planning. To demonstrate its continued commitment to regional marine planning, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government publishes a renewed vision statement. This should include:

- **Specific aims, objectives and outcomes for regional marine planning.**
- **Identification of priority regions for future rollout of regional marine planning and indicative timescales.**
- **Priority socioeconomic and environmental issues that should be considered in future Regional Marine Plans.**
- **Details of work to secure long-term finance for future implementation of regional marine planning.**

The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government should do more to communicate the benefits of regional marine planning to coastal communities and other stakeholders across the nation.

Theme 1: Membership and governance of Marine Planning Partnerships

Guidance

23. The Committee recognises that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to regional marine planning, and that it is important for regions to develop governance structures appropriate to meet local circumstances. However, the Committee heard that in some regions, the process of establishing Marine Planning Partnerships has been complex and that there has been a lack of clarity in decision-making processes. This has led to a breakdown of trust between stakeholders which has had a detrimental impact on collaborative working.
24. The Committee understands the need for central government to allow regional governance to be developed independently. However, the Committee is concerned that Marine Planning Partnerships have been left to figure out how to develop complex plans with little advice on best practice. The Committee identified a need for clearer guidance from the Scottish Government on the roles and responsibilities of Marine Planning Partnerships and the process for developing Regional Marine Plans from the outset. Numerous ‘lessons learned’ reports on non-statutory marine plans have been published but have not been well utilised.
25. The Committee notes that not all stakeholders involved in the development of Regional Marine Plans will have knowledge or a clear understanding of marine planning or what is expected of them. Evidence received by the Committee suggested the need for training to enable a better understanding among stakeholders of the process and to encourage trust and collaborative working.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government publishes new national guidance for regional marine planning. Guidance should be provided in a dedicated website and include published 'lessons learned' documents. New guidance should include the following—

Best practice guidance for developing Regional Marine Plans and stakeholder engagement.

- **Processes for selecting members of Marine Planning Partnerships**
- **Processes for decision-making, mediation of conflicting views and mechanisms for dispute resolution.**
- **Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of Marine Scotland in assisting the development of Regional Marine Plans.**
- **Guidance on how neighbouring Marine Planning Partnerships should interact and align Regional Marine Plans.**
- **Details of non-government funding sources available to support regional marine planning.**
- **Links to information on international best practice.**

The Committee recommends that Marine Scotland should provide a training course for new Marine Planning Partnerships to ensure that delegates and stakeholders involved in the development of Regional Marine Plans have a clear understanding of the process and what is expected of them. This training should include approaches to collaborative working and deliberative processes for achieving consensus.

Governance

26. The Committee identified conflicting views about perceived bias in the vested interests of different stakeholders involved in regional marine planning. Stakeholders also raised concerns about the transparency of the selection of Members and decision-making processes. The Committee is concerned that a lack of trust between stakeholders erodes collaborative approaches and the ability to reach consensus in developing policies to be included in Regional Marine Plans.
27. The Committee notes the potential to learn from the experience of the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership in developing governance in areas with complex competing demands on marine resources and where multiple stakeholders and local authorities are involved.
28. The Committee would like to see Marine Scotland and independent chairs play a stronger role in advising on best practice approaches to ensuring balanced membership, transparent governance structures and transparent decision-making processes in the formation of new Marine Planning Partnerships.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government's review of regional

marine planning should consider whether provisions under the Marine (Scotland) Act provide sufficient flexibility to allow appropriate governance structures for future emerging Marine Planning Partnerships. The review should also consider best practice governance structures for complex regions comparable to the Clyde.

The Committee recommends that Marine Scotland should initiate work to identify best practice for appointing independent Chairs for Marine Planning Partnerships to develop and facilitate trust and transparency in the process.

The Committee recommends that independent chairs of Marine Planning Partnerships should be responsible for dispute resolution, with clear guidance on the process for dispute resolution. Including escalating issues to Marine Scotland/Scottish Ministers where appropriate.

The Committee recommends that Marine Planning Partnerships should demonstrate transparency in membership and facilitate trust in decision making by publishing minutes of meetings including relevant declarations of interest at each meeting for matters under consideration.

The Committee recommends that Marine Planning Partnerships should publish a register of interests setting out any conflicts of interest delegates might have in undertaking their statutory role in developing Regional Marine Plans.

The Committee strongly recommends that Marine Planning Partnerships should adhere to the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies.

Interaction between Marine Planning Partnerships and Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups

29. The Committee heard that there was a lack of clarity over how Marine Planning Partnerships and Regional Inshore Fisheries groups (RIFGs) should interact, particularly in the development of Regional Marine Plans and Fisheries Management Plans.
30. The Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO) is the only RIFG of five in Scotland that has statutory powers to implement fisheries management measures. The Committee heard about strong collaboration between the SSMO and the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership to identify, map and introduce fisheries management measures to protect areas of high biodiversity value. This protection was subsequently included as policy in the draft Shetland Marine Plan.
31. The Committee considers this to be an example of good practice in collaborative working between Marine Planning Partnerships and RIFGs. However, the Committee notes that the limited resources and powers of most RIFGs may undermine partnership working.

The Committee notes positive support for the Scottish Government's proposals to strengthen local management with Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups (RIFGs) in its *Future of Fisheries Management* national discussion. The Committee recommends introducing legislation providing a statutory underpinning for

RIFGs. This legislation should provide provisions requiring joint working between RIFGs and Marine Planning Partnerships in developing Fisheries Management Plans and Regional Marine Plans.

The Committee recommends that Fisheries Management Plans and Regional Marine Plans should be developed in tandem to facilitate partnership working and avoid conflicting policy proposals. Both plans should develop and agree a common set of socioeconomic and environmental objectives underpinned by the principles of sustainable development.

Theme 2: Scope and expectations of Marine Planning Partnerships and Regional Marine Plans

Alignment with the National Marine Plan

32. Regional Marine Plans are required to be developed in accordance with the National Marine Plan. However, the Committee identified uncertainty over the ability of Marine Planning Partnerships to include policy in Regional Marine Plans that goes beyond the policies in the National Marine Plan.
33. The National Marine Plan was published in 2015, prior to EU referendum, the Scottish Government's declaration of a climate emergency and the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, the context for the 'Vision, Objectives and Approach to Policies' in the National Marine Plan has changed significantly. Consequently, issues currently affecting coastal communities and marine ecosystems were not fully anticipated when the National Marine Plan was drafted.

In its 2021 review of the National Marine Plan and development of a 'Blue Economy Action Plan', the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government sets clear aims and objectives for regional marine planning in tackling key environmental and socioeconomic issues facing coastal regions. This should demonstrate how the latest scientific evidence on the health of Scotland's marine environment has informed alignment with wider policy ambitions such as the Climate Change Plan and ambition for a 'Green Recovery'.

Spatial management of marine activities

34. The Committee identified an expectation among some stakeholders that Regional Marine Plans would include the spatial management of different marine sectoral activities. The National Marine Plan states that Regional Marine Plans should consider "Identifying areas for preferential use by specific sectors, where appropriate, following consultation and using appropriate mechanisms such as sustainability appraisal and scenario mapping".
35. The Committee considers that this aspect of regional marine planning has not been well utilised. This is particularly relevant to the requirement under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 for marine plans to include policies contributing to the

protection and enhancement of Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and MPAs designated under European Directives. Evidence received by the Committee highlighted spatial management as a useful tool in ensuring marine activities do not undermine the protection provided by MPAs.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government consults and provides clear guidance on the appropriate use of spatial prescription of sectoral activities in Regional Marine Plans. Particular emphasis should be given to how Regional Marine Plans should contribute towards the protection and enhancement of Marine Protected Areas.

Legal scope of Regional Marine Plans

36. The Committee identified a strong desire among marine stakeholders and communities to tackle a range of local socioeconomic and environmental issues. However, there was uncertainty over whether the ability to address these issues fell within the legal scope of Regional Marine Plans. As a result, there was frustration among some stakeholders over a perceived dilution of policies leading to discouragement of future engagement in the regional marine planning process.
37. The Committee would like Marine Planning Partnerships to be ambitious in taking localised and novel approaches to tackling issues identified in their marine regions, but there needs to be a clear understanding of the legal scope of Regional Marine Plans from the outset of plan development. The limitations of regional marine planning also need to be communicated to stakeholders and communities to manage expectations.
38. Despite these limitations, the Committee views Marine Planning Partnerships as conduits for feeding local views to central government. Where issues cannot be addressed in Regional Marine Plans, opportunities should be identified for enabling stakeholder views to be fed into wider government marine decision-making.

The Committee believes that Marine Planning Partnerships should be empowered to identify and address local marine issues. Where these lay outside the legal scope of Regional Marine Plans, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers mechanisms that enable Marine Planning Partnerships to contribute to the development of national policy and legislation. This should include the following:

- **Regular attendance of Marine Scotland Officials at Marine Planning Partnership meetings to identify priority areas of concern**
- **Ensuring Marine Planning Partnerships are made aware of relevant Scottish Government consultations**
- **Providing Marine Planning Partnerships with opportunities to identify priorities for data collection to be undertaken by Marine Scotland**
- **Enabling Marine Planning Partnerships to provide input in reviewing the National Marine Plan.**

Enabling Marine Planning Partnerships to contribute towards developing management measures for Marine Protected Areas.

Integration of marine and terrestrial planning

39. The Committee's commissioned research identified examples of strong relationships between terrestrial and marine planning in international comparisons. For example, New Zealand takes a holistic ecosystem approach with the terrestrial planning system extending out to 12 nautical miles from the coastline. In Norway, zoning plans developed by municipalities straddle land and sea out to 1 nautical mile. Marine and terrestrial planning in the UK was found to be less integrated and faces challenges in aligning a long-standing terrestrial planning regulatory regime with the relatively new process of marine planning.
40. The Committee acknowledges that it will take time to achieve better integration. However, evidence received by the Committee suggested that opportunities for better integration between terrestrial and marine planning systems should be explored as regional marine planning progresses.
41. The Committee notes that aquaculture planning decisions currently sit within the terrestrial planning system. Evidence received by the Committee highlighted that this presents both opportunities and challenges for the integration of marine and terrestrial planning. There is potential for increased knowledge and expertise in marine issues among terrestrial planners, but also a risk that aquaculture planning decisions are undertaken in isolation without consideration of cumulative pressures on the marine environment and stakeholder input.
42. The Committee would like to see the Scottish Government take leadership in driving better integration and raising awareness and promoting capacity building of marine planning expertise within local authorities.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government reviews options for improving the integration between terrestrial and marine planning. This should include alignment and integration with:

- **The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**
- **Regional Spatial Strategies**
- **Local Development Plans (LDP) including aligning or integrating any possible marine strategies or action plans with LDP action programmes and monitoring statements**
- **The Infrastructure Investment Plan**
- **River Basin Management Plans**
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans developed by Local Authorities**

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should consider

options for Marine Planning Partnerships to play a role in aquaculture planning decisions. This could include options to include Marine Planning Partnerships as a statutory consultee in approving planning consent for new development.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government's assessment of regional marine planning should identify opportunities for raising awareness of the benefits of marine planning and promote capacity building of marine planning expertise in Local Authorities.

Theme 3: Finance, resources and expertise

Finance

43. The Committee recognises the substantial economic challenges facing the Scottish Government. It is also recognised that finance available for regional marine planning is below what was originally forecast during development of the Marine (Scotland) Bill.
44. The Committee is concerned that a lack of finance available from central government is undermining the rollout of regional marine planning and the dedication and goodwill built up by stakeholders involved in the regional marine planning process so far.
45. Efforts by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to initiate regional marine planning is a pertinent illustration. Written evidence to the Committee explained that the Comhairle has not been able to secure funding for this from the Scottish Government. Recognising the potential opportunity that regional marine planning can bring to the region, the Comhairle had applied for EU funding to finance preparatory work but was unsuccessful. The Comhairle stated: "There is considerable will within the community to contribute to effective marine planning, based on detailed local knowledge and expertise, but this opportunity is being frustrated by the slow rollout of Regional Marine Plans to the Marine Regions."
46. The Committee is concerned that continued underfunding could lead to disillusionment among some stakeholders that could result in an imbalance of interests represented in decision-making. It is also concerned that Marine Planning Partnerships lack the necessary funding to perform their statutory functions and to implement and monitor Regional Marine Plans.
47. The Committee's commissioned research on international comparisons found that funding for marine planning in Scotland (£250K- £300K per plan spread over 3 years) was "significantly below" the estimated level of funding in international examples.
48. The Committee also notes that this research highlighted the substantial return on investment in marine planning. For example, in 2011, [DEFRA estimated the costs](#) of setting up a marine planning system in England to be £34 million and the total running costs were estimated to be around £1 million per annum. However, estimated economic benefits once the marine planning system is fully implemented

was estimated to be £46.8 million per annum. The Committee notes that Marine Scotland estimated that in 2018, the Scottish marine economy **generated £4.3 billion in gross value added and provided employment for 74,200 people.**

49. Evidence received by the Committee suggested that the Scottish Government should explore new avenues for financing regional marine planning such as Crown Estate Scotland revenues, marine industry levies and the Scottish National Investment Bank.

The Committee considers that regional marine planning has the potential to be a key driver for delivering a Green Recovery and sustainable economic growth in Scotland's coastal communities.

The Committee urges the Scottish Government to recognise the potential for substantial economic return on investment in regional marine planning. The Committee strongly recommends that the Scottish Government should commit to providing finance to establish Marine Planning Partnerships in all 11 Scottish Marine Regions over the next 10 years and to ensure adequate funding for existing Marine Planning Partnerships to undertake their statutory functions. This finance should be allocated for the duration of three-year marine planning statutory review cycles.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government begins work on exploring avenues for new financing options such as Crown Estate Scotland revenues, marine industry levies and the Scottish National Investment Bank as a matter of priority.

Expertise

50. The Committee notes that marine planning as a profession lags behind the credentials of the terrestrial planning system. The Committee understands that marine planning is a relatively new concept and it will take time for the marine planning profession to develop. However, the Committee would like to see the Scottish Government play a central role in building the profession to where it needs to be to meet the demands of new marine developments such as offshore renewable energy, aquaculture and tourism.
51. Developing the profession also relies on providing employment opportunities in marine planning. The Committee's inquiry has found there is insufficient marine planning expertise in some regions to support regional marine planning. Evidence suggested that increased funding and longer-term contracts with competitive salaries were required to attract the required expertise or upskill existing planning professionals.

The Committee recommends the Scottish Government begins working with Heads of Planning Scotland, the Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland and Research Institutes to identify how to improve the standard and availability of marine planning expertise in Scotland to meet the long-term objectives of marine planning. This work should seek to establish what is required for marine planning to reach a professional standard similar to terrestrial planning. This should

include working towards a CPD accredited programme of training for marine planning.

The Committee recommends that Marine Scotland consider working with the MAST-S Marine Planning and Governance Forum to establish an annual workshop on regional marine planning. This would provide an opportunity for Marine Planning Partnerships, marine stakeholders and research community to share best practice, identify data collection and research opportunities and encourage professional development in marine planning.

Research and data collection

52. The Committee understands the importance of scientific research in providing a strong evidence base to inform marine planning decisions. Data collection and monitoring is also important for ongoing assessment of the effectiveness in achieving objectives set out in Regional Marine Plans. The Committee heard that there is a lack of finance for scientific support for regional marine planning.
53. The Committee identified good examples of collaborative working in Shetland between the Marine Planning Partnership, NAFC Marine Centre and fishers to identify and fill data gaps to inform regional marine planning. The 'Clyde 2020 Research and Advisory Group' in the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership was also valued, although its relationship with the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership was unclear to some stakeholders.
54. The Committee would like to see improved links between Marine Planning Partnerships, Regional Inshore Fisheries Groups and academic expertise across Scotland.

The Committee recommends that new Marine Planning Partnerships explore options for forming research advisory subgroups to guide research support and establish the scientific evidence base for Regional Marine Plans. This could include a representative from Marine Scotland Science and a fisheries industry representative to develop and facilitate trust and collaboration in science and data collection. The existence of research subgroups should not preclude opportunities to collaborate with the wider national and international research community.

The Committee recommends that Marine Scotland explore opportunities for involving fishers in data collection for marine planning as part of its inshore fleet modernisation programme.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government provides dedicated funding to support research contributing towards regional marine planning.

Theme 4: Community and stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement

55. The Committee identified a range of community and stakeholder engagement approaches used by existing and emerging Marine Planning Partnerships. These approaches have had mixed success. The Committee recognises that different regions face different challenges due to varying geography, marine industry and connection of populations to the marine environment. There are also significant challenges in communicating the purpose of Regional Marine Plans to communities and stakeholders.
56. The Committee considers community and stakeholder engagement to be a crucial component of delivering effective outcomes from regional marine planning. However, engagement is costly and stakeholders in remote coastal communities can be particularly hard to reach. Engaging with regional marine planning can also be challenging for fishers who may have to sacrifice income to attend meetings and engagement events.
57. Changing working practices resulting from the coronavirus pandemic may provide an opportunity to rethink how engagement activities are conducted.

The Committee recommends that Marine Planning Partnerships consider how the widespread adoption of video conferencing and other digital engagement tools as a result of the coronavirus pandemic could be deployed in future engagement work. This offers potential to improve engagement with ‘hard to reach’ communities and stakeholders and reduce the time and cost of engagement work and meeting attendance.

The Committee recommends that Marine Scotland and Marine Planning Partnerships should establish an online resource to improve knowledge transfer and sharing best practice on approaches to community and stakeholder engagement.

Community representation

58. The Committee heard concerns over the ability of community interests to be represented in Marine Planning Partnerships and marine licensing decisions. The Committee is concerned that the legislation may be too prescriptive to allow sufficient flexibility for the inclusion of community groups in Marine Planning Partnerships.
59. Written evidence to the Committee identified opportunities for aligning regional marine planning with wider Scottish Government policy to improve community involvement in marine issues such as—
- Providing a mechanism for community consent for marine development in the National Marine Plan.
 - Listing Marine Planning Partnerships as a relevant public authority which a [Participation Request](#) can be made to under [Part 3 of the Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act](#).
 - Potential for local ownership and empowerment of marine assets under the [Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019](#) (transfer or delegation of assets and their management).

- Identifying policies to tackle marine issues through [Islands Community Impact Assessments](#) under the Islands (Scotland) Act.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should review provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and wider legislation on community empowerment to identify legislative barriers to engagement and to identify opportunities to improve community representation in regional marine planning and marine licensing decisions.

Conclusion

60. Marine planning requires managing competing demands on marine resources from a wide range of uses such as shipping, fisheries, defence, transport, conservation and recreation. This requires input from a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, central government and coastal communities. The Committee acknowledges that bringing all of these sectors and interests together is challenging.
61. It also acknowledges that progress has been made since the enactment of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and those that have been involved in the establishment of the regional marine partnerships to date have, to some extent, been 'pioneers' in this work. This will have had some bearing on the seemingly slow progress in developing the anticipated eleven Regional Marine Plans.
62. However, the Committee expects that in undertaking work on this inquiry and with the Scottish Government's commitment to Regional Marine Plans, the pace of development can 'pick up'. Scotland is in a strong position to be at the forefront of developments in marine planning. The Committee understands that there are challenges to overcome, not least the impact of the global health pandemic and the Scottish Government's focus on that, and the changes that will follow the UK's exit from the European Union.
63. The Committee considers that progress of work on regional marine planning must continue into the next parliamentary session and must gather pace, with the appropriate funding. The Scottish Government has committed to tasking Marine Scotland with the commissioning of an assessment on the current status and future options for regional marine planning. The Committee will include proposals for further scrutiny on marine planning in its legacy report for its successor Committee.

Annexe A

On 26 June, 2020 the Committee published its [Development and implementation of Regional Marine Plans in Scotland: interim report \(July 2020\)](#).

Annexe B

Marine Alliance for Science and Technology (MAST-S) research paper: [Using marine planning to balance competing demands on the marine environment: International comparisons](#)

Annexe C

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MINISTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

14 July 2020

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND REFORM COMMITTEE- DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL MARINE PLANS IN SCOTLAND: INTERIM REPORT (JULY 2020)

I would like to thank the Committee for the Interim Report on the Development and Implementation of Regional Marine Plans in Scotland. I would be keen for Marine Scotland to commission an assessment on the current status and future options for regional marine planning. In doing so I would wish that such an assessment would take into account and seek to address the Committee's findings to date. I would also invite the Committee's input on the scoping of the work to ensure that it is aligned as far as possible with the inquiry. To that purpose it would be useful to understand the timescales that the Committee are working towards with regards a final report.

RESPONSE FROM THE CONVENER TO THE MINISTER

17 July 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 14 July 2020 in relation to the Committee's interim report on regional marine planning in Scotland.

The Committee is very interested in the prospect of the commissioning of an assessment on the current status and future options for regional marine planning. Members appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this.

The timeframe for publication of the Committee's own report is predicated on current workload with the Committee looking to publish its final report in January 2021.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

