

North-east Lewis

Possible Marine Protected Area



A home to the Risso's dolphin

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North-east Lewis possible Marine Protected Area (pMPA) is the only area in Scotland's seas where Risso's dolphins are recorded in high numbers. At 58° north this pMPA is located towards the most northerly extent of their range, however the waters around Lewis provide such a plentiful supply of food some Risso's dolphins decide to stay all year around!



Risso's dolphins normally favour deeper waters, but around the Isle of Lewis they gather closer to shore particularly during summer months. Individuals have been re-sighted year on year, indicating at least partial residency for some dolphins. Mothers with calves and groups consisting entirely of juveniles have also been recorded within the pMPA. This suggests these waters are not only essential for feeding but may also be important for breeding, nursing and raising their young.



Location: 58° 21.019' N 6° 06.165' W

Area: 907 km²



Sandeels above a sandy seabed.

Proposed Protected Features

Biodiversity

Risso's dolphin, sandeels.

Geodiversity

Quaternary of Scotland, Marine Geomorphology of the Scottish Shelf Seabed.

Conservation Objectives

The aim is to conserve these features in order to make a long-lasting contribution to the MPA network.

Risso's dolphins are distinctive in appearance and easily distinguishable from other dolphins by their grey bodies which are covered by white scarring that is unique to each dolphin. These markings, predominantly around the mouth and head, are made by squid and octopus which are their favourite prey species, as well as through contact with other Risso's dolphins. These social animals are typically sighted in small groups of between six and 12 individuals. They communicate with each other using a series of clicks, pulses and whistles.

The possible MPA encompasses a former sandeel fishing ground that supports an important component of a larger, patchy sandeel population on the west coast. Sandeels are highly nutritious and are the preferred prey for many species of fish, seabirds, seals, whales and dolphins. The well-flushed sandy seabed substrates preferred by the sandeels also form part of an internationally important assemblage of geodiversity interests present in this part of the Minch.

Making a response and further information

You can make a response to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub: www.consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/four-new-marine-protected-areas

If you are unable to use the online response form, you can also respond:

By Email: marine_conservation@gov.scot

Or by Post: pMPA Consultation, Scottish Government,
Marine Planning and Policy Division,
Area 1-A South, Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

For more information on the 2019 Marine Protected Areas consultation and the North-east Lewis possible MPA please visit: www.nature.scot/2019-possible-nature-conservation-marine-protected-areas-consultation

A juvenile Risso's dolphin pod



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