

Shiant East Bank

Possible Marine Protected Area



A seabed shaped by glaciers

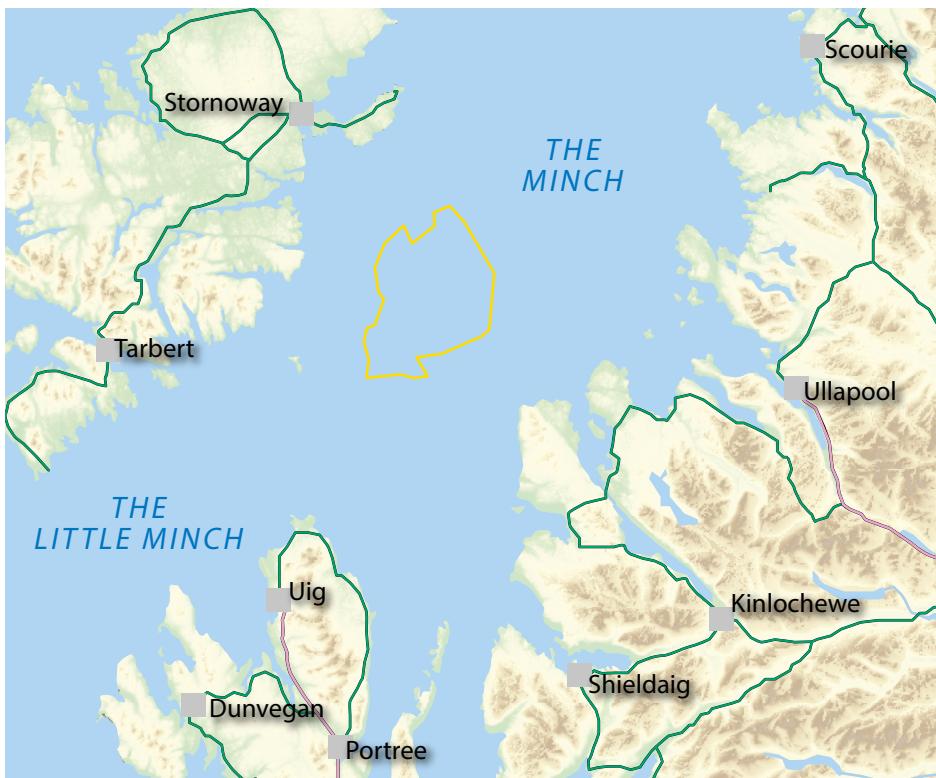
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Possible Marine Protected Area

The Minch is a wide stretch of water separating Scotland's Outer Hebrides from the mainland. Home of the mythical Blue men of the Minch feared by mariners for centuries, sailors battling rough conditions at the surface had little time to appreciate the fantastic diversity of marine life thriving on the sea bed below.



Positioned in the middle of the Minch, the Shiant East Bank possible Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area (pMPA) has been identified to protect the biologically diverse and dynamic marine environment that has evolved over the last ten thousand years. The complex underwater landscape around the bank is a legacy from the end of the last ice age, when the ice sheet that once covered most of Scotland retreated.



Location: 57° 59.536' N 6° 02.962' W

Area: 308 km²



A short-spined sea scorpion on the sandy sea bed

Proposed Protected Features

Biodiversity

Circalittoral sands and mixed sediment communities, northern sea fan and sponge communities, shelf banks and mounds.

Geodiversity

Quaternary of Scotland.

Conservation Objectives

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

Throughout the Shiant East Bank pMPA, strong currents generated by the tides create mosaics of sand and mixed sediments favoured by marine worms, clams, brittlestars, crabs and starfish. Exposed outcrops of more resistant volcanic rocks provide an elevated position for filter feeders such as northern sea fans and sponges to take advantage of the nutrient laden waters.

The large, irregular shaped banks and mounds create turbulence that draws up relatively cool and nutrient rich waters from the deep, mixing it with warmer shallower waters. This churning greatly increases the availability of food, attracting small fish and crabs which in turn draw top predators like whales, dolphins, porpoises and seabirds to the area.

The sea floor within the pMPA shows extensive signs of scarring caused by the passage of glaciers that started their journey well inland, carving out sediments from the fjords of Loch Broom and Little Loch Broom all the way out to the edge of the continental slope. The outstanding range of glacial processes visible throughout this region, above and below the waves, makes this an area of international geological importance.

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](http://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 Shiant East Bank possible MPA please visit: [www.nature.scot/2019-
possible-nature-conservation-marine-protected-areas-consultation](http://www.nature.scot/2019-possible-nature-conservation-marine-protected-areas-consultation)

A northern sea fan community on a silty ledge



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