

# Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh

Marine Protected Area

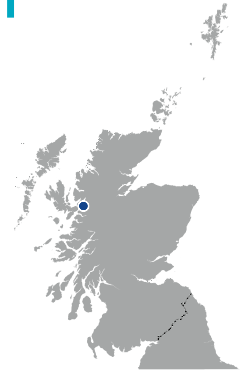
A flame shell on gravel © SNH

Home to Scotland's largest  
known flame shell bed



# Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh Marine Protected Area

Home to a huge bed of elusive yet brightly coloured bivalve molluscs known as flame shells, the Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh Marine Protected Area (MPA) covers a group of sea lochs on the west coast. When viewed from the air, they form a distinctive Y-shape. The sea lochs lie between the jagged mountains of Kintail, Lochalsh, Glenelg and Skye.



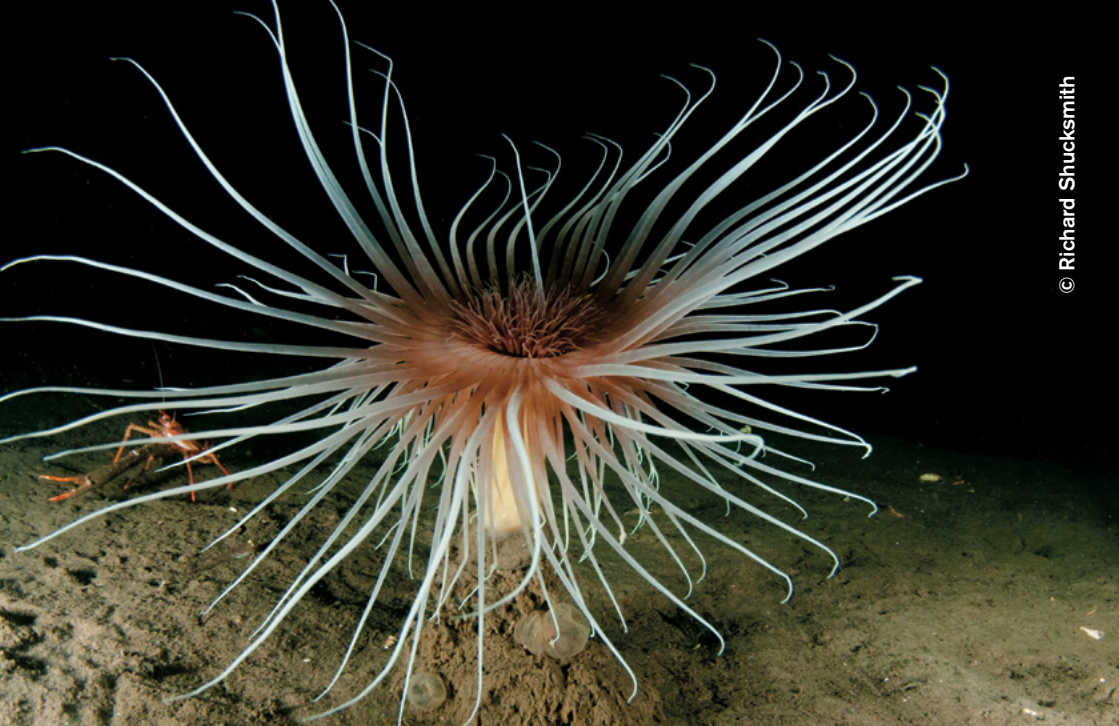
The steep sides of the mountains continue down underwater to form deep basins carpeted with burrowed mud, home to many animals that would usually only be found in deep waters, much further offshore. The MPA will provide protection for the inhabitants of the burrowed mud and an estimated 100 million flame shells, the largest known bed of this animal anywhere in the world!



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Location: 57° 15.755' N 005° 35.049' W

Area: 37 km<sup>2</sup>



A fireworks anemone

## Protected Features & Conservation Objectives

Biodiversity: burrowed mud; flame shell beds.

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

The MPA overlaps the Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for extensive areas of tide-swept reefs, extremely sheltered rocky reefs and horse mussel beds. Parts of the deep basins of the three lochs are blanketed with soft burrowed mud. The chambered burrows and mounds of Norway lobsters pepper the sea bed amongst forests of seapens. The flamboyant white tentacles of fireworks anemones flare out over the dark mud, particularly within Loch Duich where this animal is recorded in large numbers.

The flame shell bed covers an area of 0.93 km<sup>2</sup> from the shallow tide-washed waters of Kyle Akin, through the mouth of Loch Alsh, under the Skye Bridge and out into the Inner Sound. Flame shell beds stabilise the sea bed creating habitat for other animals such as peacock worms, anemones and sponges. These in turn encourage other predatory animals such as whelks, crabs and fish into the area.

# Further Information

Further information on Nature Conservation MPAs, the wider network and protected areas management is available at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork)

For Nature Conservation MPA site documents and more on the fascinating range of marine life to be found in Scotland's seas, please visit

[www.snh.gov.uk/mpas](http://www.snh.gov.uk/mpas) - for territorial waters

[www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas) - for offshore waters



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 **JNCC**  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee

## Marine life associated with the features of the MPA



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