

Shetland Marine Planning Partnership Newsletter

Supporting clean, healthy, safe and productive seas in Shetland



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Welcome to the Winter 22/23 issue of the Shetland MPP newsletter

National marine and terrestrial planning frameworks are currently subject to a number of changes, National Planning Framework 4 is expected to be adopted imminently, the National Marine Plan review process has been initiated and Marine Scotland are consulting on Highly Protected Marine Protected Areas. In addition, the Shetland Islands Council are reviewing their Aquaculture Guidance and UHI Shetland have launched a Marine Values survey. There is an opportunity for interested individuals and organisations to participate in these consultations, ensuring a range of views are considered in these local and national processes.

This newsletter also contains information on a range of projects which have continued to be developed by, or in association with, the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership or UHI Shetland, relevant to marine planning. We hope you enjoy reading about these projects.

Rachel Shucksmith
Marine Spatial
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To get in touch please contact the Marine Planning Team at UHI Shetland

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Marine Planning Partnership News

Marine values survey now live

Do you live in Shetland? Please take part in a new survey which is looking to understand how we connect with and value our local marine and coastal environment in and around Shetland.

The survey is led by Dr Emma McKinley at Cardiff University, working in partnership with UHI Shetland along with other partner organisations, to explore how different communities around the UK value their own local coasts and seas.

To participate, follow the link below or scan the QR code on the poster -

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/OLinShetland_Nov22

Diverse Marine Values Survey

Cardiff University are working in partnership with the UHI Shetland, along with other partner organisations, to explore how different communities around the UK value their own local coasts and seas. Through the SMMR-funded Diverse Marine Values project, **we are interested in understanding how you connect with and value your local marine and coastal environment** in and around Shetland. We want to get to know more about what is important to you and your community about the coast and seas around you.

To do this, **we invite you to take part in our short survey**, which will ask you about your concerns about the marine environment around Shetland, what you value most about the coasts and seas around you, and how you use the marine environment.

You can access the survey by scanning the QR code or going to the following link:

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/OLinShetland_2023



Diverse Marine Values UHI SHETLAND



Marine Scotland Consultation- Highly Protected Marine Areas

On 12 December 2022 the Scottish Government commenced public consultation on Highly Protected Marine Areas (HMPAs). **This consultation runs until 20 March 2023.**

HMPAs are designated areas of the sea that are strictly protected from damaging levels of human activities, allowing marine ecosystems to recover and thrive.

Through the Bute House Agreement, Scottish Ministers have committed to designate at least 10% of Scotland's seas as HMPAs by 2026.

This consultation sets out a 5 stage selection process that would ultimately lead to the designation of such areas. No areas are currently

identified as part of this consultation but future designated HMPAs could extend existing Marine Protected Areas, or be new areas both within and outwith 12 Nautical Miles. Given the 10% requirement it is likely that some of these areas will ultimately

Main aims of having HMPAs are to:

- Facilitate ecosystem recovery and enhancement via the removal of pressures and/or active restoration
- Enhance some of the benefits that coastal communities and others derive from our seas
- Contribute to the mitigation of climate change impacts
- Support ecosystem adaptation and improve resilience, including to climate change

fall within Shetland's Regional Waters. The consultation is seeking views and comments on a number of key documents that propose how HPMAs will contribute the above aims. It can be viewed online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/4rre285a>

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan outlines how stakeholders can engage with the process and provide their views. It can be viewed at:

<https://tinyurl.com/4j7swuvs>

Shetland Islands Council intends to provide a response to the consultation in due course.



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Marine Planning Partnership News

National Planning Framework 4

On 11 January 2023, the Scottish Parliament voted to approve National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). The Scottish Government will now proceed with its adoption and publication, which is expected to happen on 13 February 2023. At this point it will become part of the statutory development plan and NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy will be superseded from this date.

NPF4 sets out a spatial strategy for the long-term development of Scotland until 2045 and is based around six overarching spatial principles to support the planning and delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places. Addressing climate change, ensuring a just transition to net zero and improving biodiversity are key components of NPF4 along with encouraging sustainable development in rural areas.

NPF4 sets out that the Scottish Government shall work alongside Scotland's marine planning authorities to build a more resilient future for island and coastal communities. This includes matters such as maximising the benefits of renewable energy and growing the blue and green economy.

Land-based local development plan policies and spatial strategies are required to align with national, sectoral and regional marine plans. We will therefore engage closely with Shetland Islands Council planning service to ensure their next local development plan is aligned with the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan.



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Review of Aquaculture Guidance

Given the imminent adoption of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan, the Shetland Islands Council marine planning team will soon commence a review of their existing Supplementary Guidance on Aquaculture that was adopted in 2017.

This guidance applies to all planning applications for fish farming development which the Council has authority to issue planning permission for under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act. It includes general policies and specific policies relating to finfish and shellfish development, which the Council uses to determine planning applications.

The review will commence with an initial period of public consultation to gain views and opinions on aspects of the policy which the Council consider need to be reviewed. This includes matters such as the separation distance policy for aquaculture development and spatial policy relating to development in the Sullom Voe Harbour Area following the publication of the Masterplan.

It is intended that the consultation will run for a minimum of 8 weeks. Further information on the review will be provided by the Council soon.



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NMP2- Engagement Strategy

On 27 October 2022, the Scottish Government published their engagement strategy for a new National Marine Plan for Scotland's seas (NMP2).

The current National Marine Plan (2015) sets out the strategic policies for the sustainable development of Scotland's marine resources out to 200 nautical miles, covering topics including offshore wind and other marine renewables, aquaculture, aggregates and shipping, ports and harbours.

Since the first National Marine Plan was published, there have been significant changes in Scotland – including the Scottish Government's commitment to becoming a net zero nation by 2045, the impacts of EU exit and increased understanding of the impacts of climate change and human activity on the marine environment.

The Scottish Government want all sectors and communities to be part of developing NMP2, building shared objectives for the management of Scotland's seas.

The strategy therefore sets out an overarching framework for engaging the people of Scotland, and beyond, over the next three years, as the Government develops and delivers NMP2. It sets out their approach to engagement, options for how they will engage with different sectors and communities, and timeframes for engagement during the different stages of the planning process.

The strategy will be updated regularly, based on stakeholder feedback and evidence collected throughout the planning process. It can be viewed online at:

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8wxzx7>

or scan the QR code



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Marine Planning Partnership News

UHI Shetland attends MASTS annual science meeting

Researchers from the marine planning team at UHI Shetland joined fisheries colleagues to travel to Glasgow in October to present at this year's MASTS Annual Science Meeting. The Marine Alliance for Science and Technology Scotland (MASTS) conference is a chance for researchers from across Scotland to come together and discuss novel research and key issues relevant to Scotland's seas.

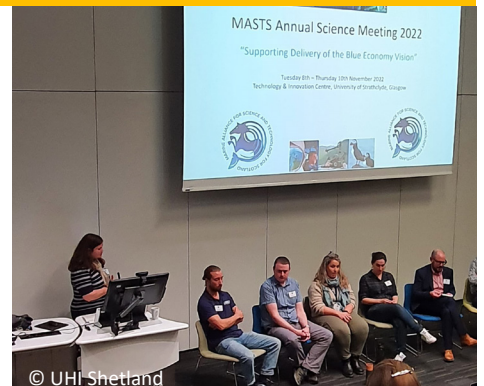
Rachel Shucksmith (Marine Spatial Planning Manager at UHI Shetland) chaired a special session on marine planning policy and management which enabled early career researchers to present research relevant to marine management.

Posters were presented by Dr Becky Giesler on the invasive species monitoring carried out in Shetland,

by Rachel on the implementation progress of the SIRMP, and by Sophie Smith on the citizen science work carried out by volunteers of the Shetland Community Wildlife Group to monitor porpoises in Shetland waters.

UHI Shetland research was also featured in a number of collaborative presentations and received mentions by MSP Mairi Gougeon (Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands) in her keynote speech.

Dr Inne Withouck, who completed her PhD at UHI in the summer and is now based in Ostend, presented her research into integrating of the socio-economic differences between marine regions into strategic-level suitability mapping as a poster.



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Above: Rachel Shucksmith chairing a special session on Marine Policy and Management - linking current and future research to policy and impact. Left: Inne Withouck with her electronic poster presentation



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Invasive Non-native Species

Updating Shetland's baseline map of marine non-native species

This year, UHI Shetland expanded its annual monitoring of marine non-native species to visit sites last surveyed in 2012. Marine non-native species are monitored in eight sites around Shetland each year to lookout for potentially harmful species like Carpet sea-squirt and Wireweed.

Nineteen sites were surveyed in the summer, using settlement panels set out for 3 months in marinas, and visual assessments where the team at UHI Shetland (and some community members) went and searched marina pontoons for these alien species.

No new non-natives were found in Shetland and the species that are here still seem to be at quite low abundances. We found 7 new site records for non-natives where species have spread to new areas, and ten sites had higher numbers of non-natives than were found in 2012. The main marine non-natives we find in Shetland are the Orange ripple bryozoan *Schizoporella japonica* and the Japanese skeleton shrimp *Caprella mutica*.

We also collected some water samples to send to Marine Scotland for environmental DNA analysis to see if

the highly invasive *Didemnum vexillum* is present. These samples came back showing that this species is still absent which is good news.



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Get in touch

For more information on marine invasives and biosecurity or to send us your records, email Becky on marineplan.shetland@uhi.ac.uk

Becky Giesler
Marine Planning Officer
UHI Shetland



Download our INNS guide

Download our INNS identification guide [here](#) or scan the QR code and help us monitor and limit the impact from INNS in Shetland.

We also have range of resources to help marine users minimise the spread of INNS on the marine planning pages of the UHI Shetland website, scan the QR code or click [here](#).



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Important Marine Species and Habitats

New PhD student

Sophie Smith is a SUPER DTP PhD student based at UHI Shetland. The primary aim of her PhD is to establish the marine region surrounding Shetland to be fundamental areas towards the conservation of harbour porpoises through designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Data will be collected through a multi-faceted approach in methodologies through the use of land-based surveys, acoustic surveys, and drone surveys. This will determine harbour porpoise spatial occurrence, temporal occurrence, and behaviour to provide an ecosystem-based management approach towards their conservation.

Prior to the studentship, Sophie graduated in Marine Biology BSc (HONS) from the University of Portsmouth with a thesis involving the investigation of the 'Spatio-temporal patterns of harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) occurrence in Jersey, British Isles'. In addition, she has acquired multiple marine mammal internship positions, the most recent being the role of a 'Whale researcher and Acoustic Analysts' for The British Antarctic Survey to support their research in the 'Wild Water Whales Acoustic Recovery Project'.

To find out more about the PhD and how you can get involved, join Sophie and the Marine Spatial Planning team for our Fintastic Friday Shorewatches.



Welcome Sophie!



Focus species- Maerl

Maerl is a type of unattached coralline algae which can form large dense beds.

These beds form important habitats and nursery areas supporting a wide variety of other marine species.

Maerl is extremely slow growing, some of the extensive beds may be over 1000 years old. Over time the beds will consist of living, pink maerl and white, dead maerl which all form a complex 3D structure which is favoured by burrowing marine fauna.

Maerl beds have been classified as a Priority Marine Feature (PMF) by NatureScot meaning they are considered to be of national conservation importance.

Within the SIRMP, PMFs are protected through policy **MP SPCON4: Priority Marine Features (pg 73)**.



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Download our guide to important marine species

To be able to monitor and record these species we need accurate and up-to-date information on their distribution around Shetland.

You can help by downloading our guide to important marine life in Shetland [HERE](#) or scan the QR code.



SSMO Closed Areas

The Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation (SSMO) manage and regulate the fisheries for shellfish within Shetland's six nautical mile limit. Management measures include the licensing of vessels and the implementation of regulations and other measures, to ensure the long-term sustainability of these fisheries.

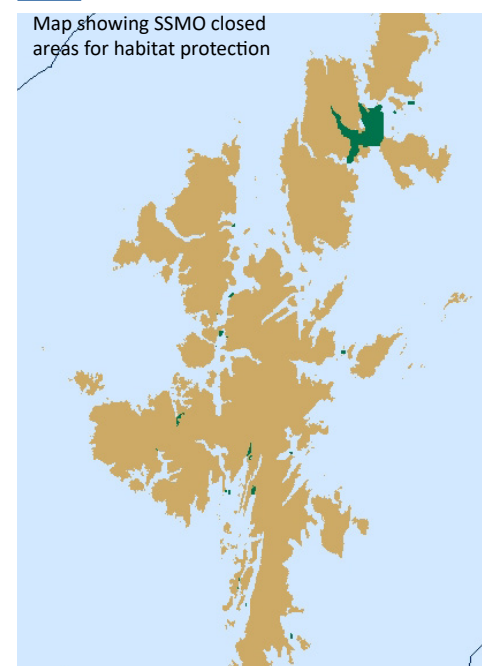
The Marine Sciences Department at UHI Shetland worked with the SSMO to establish voluntary closed areas for scallop dredge fishing to allow fishermen to avoid sensitive habitats.

In the case of the inshore waters around Shetland, this included maerl, horse mussel and seagrass.

The MS department then used its acoustic survey and drop camera equipment to accurately map the extent of these types of habitat which are detailed in the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP)

The SSMO sit on the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership Advisory Group and have supported the creation of the SIRMP.

More information on the SSMO can be found on their website www.ssmo.co.uk



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Reports and Publications

New article on governance of shared resources

UHI Shetland colleague Dr. Mika Schroder has a forthcoming article entitled '*[Legal] Learning from the Commons: insights gleaned from the stories we tell of law, society and human-nature relations*'.

In it she reflects on the ways that the stories we tell of law and society contribute to shaping and normalising public and institutional understandings of societal ills and solutions, and human-nature relationships. The article offers insights into the benefits and discussions that could come with being more mindful, and critical of the stories we tell of society, of human-nature relations, and of law.

In reflecting on current debates on transformative change, this includes for instance looking towards bottom-up, grassroots approaches to governance and management of resources and spaces held in common, as well as respecting and recognising the significance of local knowledges in decision-making processes. In making her argument, Mika draws on debates concerning Commons-resource management and environmental justice, and highlights the importance of diversifying the stories we share, including looking to colleagues outside our own disciplines, as well as beyond academia and government more broadly.

To view the article in full, follow the link [doi: 10.1415/105373](https://doi.org/10.1415/105373) or scan the QR code



Dr. Mika Schroder

Post-Doc Researcher
UHI Shetland



Recent drone captures make special edition publication

Shetland-based drone operator Nick McCaffrey has recently had two of his unique observations published in the Aquatic Mammals 50th Anniversary Special Issue of Anecdotes. Nick has been working with Heriot-Watt University PhD researcher Emily Hague, to publish these fascinating insights into the marine world, all of which have been captured off the Shetland Isles.

The first paper shares a video of an individual long-finned pilot whale expelling placental material, which was recorded by drone footage in Yell Sound, just off the Isle of Lamba. This observation is especially exciting and interesting as it has never been observed in the wild for cetaceans before! The individual that eventually expels the material is first observed in the video swimming quickly in a tight knit group, with a young calf swimming in close proximity. Once the placental material is expelled, the group behaviour completely changes - they stop and begin to circle the material, some nudging it with their



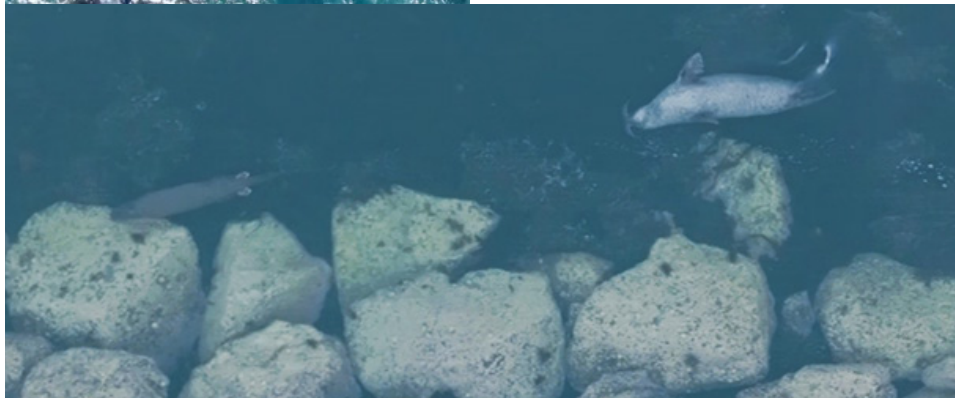
tail. For cetaceans, placental expulsion normally happens within 0-12 hours of birth, so this observation indicates a recent birth close to the Shetland Isles. However, these whales are normally a more offshore species, so this also raises questions about whether the whales are coming inshore to calve? Read the full paper and watch the video footage at <https://doi.org/10.1578/AM.48.6.2022.610>.

The second paper documents an interaction between two Shetland species, a harbour seal and a European otter. The seal pirouettes and barrel rolls through the water as it appears to closely follow the otter, with the otter not paying the seal much heed. This type of interaction likely occurs reasonably regularly between UK seal species and otters, however it has never been described in the scientific literature, despite it having potential implications for inter-species disease transmission and interesting potential implications of 'risky' behaviour between species. Read the full paper and watch the video at <https://doi.org/10.1578/AM.48.6.2022.584>



Left: Long-finned pilot whale expelling placental material

Below: Harbour seal interacting with Eurasian otter



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Shetland Community Wildlife Group News

SCWG attend the Marine Forum 2022

Representatives from SCWG recently headed to Glasgow for the annual Marine Forum in November organised by the Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme (SMASS) and Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC). The themes this year were around **Collaboration, New and Emerging Research Methods and Technologies** and **Communication and Engagement**.

It was great to meet with other

organisations across Scotland undertaking citizen science projects on marine mammals and hear from the volunteers involved.

Looking to the future we are building stronger connections with the Orkney Marine Mammal Research Initiative (OMMRI) who have also been investigating the behaviour of harbour porpoises in Longhope, Orkney using land and vessel-based surveys.



© WDC/SMASS

Upcoming Events

Drones and imagery in science

The SCWG are hosting an evening event to showcase how the use of aerial and high resolution imagery is giving new insight into the behaviours and population dynamics of marine species.

Friday 10th Feb 6pm

UHI Shetland Scalloway Campus

Nick McCaffrey- Southspear Media

Aerial photographer Nick will showcase his footage of marine mammals and show examples of how it has been used to interpret behaviour

Sophie Smith- UHI Shetland

Understanding the use of Shetland's inshore waters by harbour porpoises

Emma Steel- WDC Shorewatch

Establishing a Risso's ID Catalogue for Shetland

Dr Natalie Isaksson- ERI

Using camera trap imagery to monitor European shags at Bluemull Sound

Shorewatch training dates

Emma Steel, the Northern Isles Shorewatch project officer for Whale and Dolphin Conservation will be running training sessions in person across Shetland and virtual online sessions between 24th Feb and 11th March.

Scan the QR code to sign up to a free session or follow the link below



<https://forms.gle/43UQ8gDzKg51K4rZA>

WDC shorewatch data is shared with the Shetland MPP and helps inform regional planning in the isles.

For more information on the Shorewatch programme email Emma on northernisles@shorewatch.org

Get in touch

We would love to hear from anyone who would like to get involved in the group or has ideas for projects or leaflets that would be beneficial. So please get in touch.

Kate Allan
SCWG
Coordinator



shetlandcommunitywildlife@outlook.com
shetlandcommunitywildlife.org



Scan the QR code to go to the SCWG website

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Squid at record levels in Shetland waters

While haddock continues to be the most abundant stock, more than three times the average amount of squid (*Loligo* spp.) was identified by the 2022 Shetland Inshore Fish Survey (SIFS) carried out by UHI Shetland.

Environmental change is the most likely explanation for the phenomenon, given that squid are relatively short-lived and breed only once.

Dr Shaun Fraser, Senior Fisheries Scientist at UHI Shetland, said: "The high catches of squid recorded in 2022 were a widespread feature of the data in that they were observed in survey areas all around Shetland. Overall, these catches corresponded to the highest relative abundance of squid yet recorded in the survey timeseries."

The purpose of the survey, which has been carried out annually since 2011 using the 12m vessel *Atlantia II* (LK 502), is to provide independent information on the distribution, relative abundance and population structure of fish species in local waters.

Surveys are carried out in 52 pre-defined locations within 12 nautical miles of Shetland including in 25 areas of shallow water that are assessed as potential nursery grounds.

Catch rates for haddock continued to

be relatively high in 2022 following record levels observed the previous year.

Cod and whiting, by contrast, were below average abundance, although encouragingly cod were at higher levels in the shallow areas which suggests a healthy stock of juvenile fish.

Catches of flatfish and skate from inshore hauls were at the lower end of observed catch rates for these species, while results from shallow areas were more mixed.

The data from shallow hauls suggests that some nearshore grounds around the coastline of Shetland are nursery areas for a variety of commercial species, for example plaice and monkfish.

Shetland Fishermen's Association Executive Officer Daniel Lawson said: "Given how important inshore waters are to the Shetland fisheries ecosystem, and how vital it is for the future of fishing that nursery grounds show healthy amounts and sizes of young fish, these are once again extremely encouraging results."

More information is available by email shaun.fraser@uhi.ac.uk or [online](#)



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This newsletter has been produced by UHI Shetland on behalf of the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership.

The development of the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan is supported by funding from Shetland Islands Council and Marine Scotland. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter please contact us via email: marineplan.shetland@uhi.ac.uk

Electronic copies and past issues of the newsletter can be found on the [UHI Shetland website](#)



The Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan and more information on marine planning in Shetland can be found on the Marine Spatial Planning pages of the UHI Shetland website [here](#).

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For more information on SIC marine and coastal planning visit their website [here](#) or contact them on:

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Shetland Islands Council

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