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CRES1031
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Sustainable Seas for All – a consultation on Scotland’s first marine bill Response by the Scottish Sports Association

Introduction

The Scottish Sports Association (SSA) thanks the Scottish Government for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

The SSA is the independent voice for sports governing bodies in Scotland. We represent their interests and currently have 52 full members and 17 associate members. The governing bodies of sport are responsible for the governance, development and delivery of their individual sports and provide a formal structure for over 12,000 sports clubs in Scotland. Many of these organisations provide coaching, competition and youth participation development opportunities to their local communities and most of the 146,000 people who volunteer in sport do so within the club structure.

The marine environment will directly affect a significant number of these sports. The sports of sailing, surfing, diving, fishing, kayaking, wind surfing and other surfing derivatives, jet skiing and rowing all depend upon the seas and access to it for their activities. The coastal environment is also used for rock climbing, coastal walking, beach volleyball, cycling and horse riding. Scotland is also famous for its links golf courses.

Sport and Recreation

It is crucial that the significance of the marine environment to sport and recreation is recognised. Equally sport and recreation impact on a range of government agendas and SSA believe that greater emphasis can be made on the contribution to a Healthier Scotland. The Box 2.2 objectives should include reference to this

contribution in so far as many Scots use the coastal environment for sport, physical recreation and general recreation.

The response from **sportscotland** provides the details of the economic contribution of sport and a range of major events. As an example the significant rise in the popularity of surfing around the Scottish coast is worthy of mention. Surfing takes place in a large number of locations, some of the beaches and reef break are adjacent to small rural coastal communities who derive great benefit from the additional economic impact. Closer to the main population centres, the East Lothian coast regularly attracts large numbers of surfers, both serious and recreational who travel the relatively short distance from the central belt to surf at weekends and summer evenings.

The SSA agrees with the arguments and figures submitted within the **sportscotland** response therefore have not repeated the detail here.

There are a number of issues relating to the marine environment that do affect sport. These include water quality, pollution, navigational hazards, access to the coastline and management of overcrowding and congestion at popular sites. The sports themselves can assist in some of these areas and would welcome the opportunity to be involved in consultation and planning local solutions. For example the Royal Yachting Association produces a cruising routes atlas, which shows areas that are important to the recreational sailor.

Chapter 1 – Setting the Scene

Question 1 – We agree that there could be benefits. It is important that those with a relevant interest are consulted.

Chapter 2 – Creating Stability

Question 5 – A 3 tiered approach seems sensible.

Question 7 – We support the principle of national objectives but believe that there should be an objective for sport and physical recreation. This should start with the understanding that these activities are good in their own right, i.e. they have intrinsic value. They will also contribute to other objectives such as economic benefit, improved health and well being.

Question 10 – The SSA would wish to be involved in planning and management consultation where it directly affects sport and its activities. The SSA would be able to seek the specific views and expertise from each sport when required. This may also include consultation with the local club and volunteer infrastructure when appropriate for regional and local planning issues.

Chapter 3 – Reducing the burden

As a general principle we consider the use of licensing and its impact for sporting and recreational activities should only be introduced if there is a proven need to do so. Most sports manage their own activities through their registered clubs, codes of conduct, competency and training, provision of coaching, sharing of best practice and education.

Question 20 – Consultation must take into account local stakeholders. There are a number of sporting organisations who can assist in this process. SSA in partnership with **sportscotland** and the Scottish Association of Local Sports Clubs (SALSC) can provide access to these people through the governing bodies of sport and their local clubs. Others will be the sports and recreational staff within Local Authorities and commercial providers.

Chapter 4 - Securing the future

The SSA supports the principle of protecting the marine environment and natural heritage. It is this environment that makes it so attractive to many of the sport and recreational users.

If restrictions are required in order to maintain this environment, they must be based on research and evidence. Management of any restrictions should be conducted in such a way that continues to permit activities that do not negatively impact on the environment. It is unlikely that sporting activities will have an adverse effect on the marine or coastal environment.

Question 35 – We support the suggestion from **sportscotland** that consideration could also be given to whether there is value in recognising our important sport and recreational sites on the coast. Indeed some harbours are already recognised as important for their natural significance, their historic importance and their value as a sailing harbour.

Question 38 – SSA fully supports the principle identified in paragraph 144 that no unnecessary restrictions will be placed on activities that are not likely to damage those features for which a site is selected for conservation purposes.

Chapter 5 – Understanding our seas

Question 44 – The need to address the potential socio-economic impact and that of the wider stakeholder impact is welcomed. Many coastal sporting activities take place in remote areas with a small local economy. Although the overall financial impact may be small the local effect of any changes or restrictions can be significant.

Chapter 6 – Managing our seas

Whichever organisation is charged with managing the functions of a marine bill, it is crucial that they consult and work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. SSA believes it is crucial that this includes the sporting community, at both a national and local level.

Conclusion

We are encouraged by the recognition that our seas are valued for their wildlife, the resources and employment they provide and leisure opportunities they offer. It is important that the significance of the sporting and recreational asset is not lost as this process moves forward. I trust our comments will help the Scottish Government in shaping the marine bill.

The Scottish Sports Association is happy for this response to be made public and please do not hesitate to contact me if any clarification is required.

Yours sincerely

Chris Robison

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