

# PRESS RELEASE

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**Marine  
Conservation  
Society**

## **MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY WELCOMES SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT TO PROTECT SEABED SITE AND COMMENDS ROLE OF COMMUNITY SCUBA DIVERS**

Today the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the UK charity dedicated to protecting our seas, shores and wildlife, welcomed the announcement by Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment Richard Lochhead that Lamlash Bay is to become the first Community Marine Conservation Area in Scotland, and indeed the UK.

The local Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) worked tirelessly to make this news come about. To help underpin their successful proposal, COAST divers sought Seasearch training from MCS Scotland in 2003 and again in 2006 to enable them to describe the important seabeds, including maerl, found in Lamlash Bay.

Calum Duncan, MCS Scottish Conservation Manager and Seasearch Scotland co-ordinator said *“This is an exciting day for marine conservation in Scotland and the whole UK. COAST divers, particularly Howard Wood, Don Macneish, John and Sean Ferris and Dave Butcher, are to be commended for seeking Seasearch training and initiating a busy programme of survey diving. Since MCS training, they have surveyed over 80 sites in Lamlash Bay, Whiting Bay and the Isle of Pladda, in the process becoming the local experts for their patch.”*

*“Seasearch evidence that COAST divers gathered ensured that a sewage outfall was re-routed to avoid discharging on a fragile bed of maerl in Lamlash Bay, one of the healthiest in the Clyde. The Seasearch information collected also helped provide the underpinning evidence for their proposed marine conservation area in Lamlash Bay.”*

MCS look forward to continued support for COAST and other communities interested in their local seabed and wanting to help protect it. MCS in Scotland is a core member of the Scottish Environment LINK campaign for a Scottish Marine Bill that has the marine environment at heart. To help protect, restore and enhance Scotland’s seas, a Scottish Marine Bill must include a robust network of Nationally Important Marine Areas and be integrated with a UK Marine Bill.

### **MCS and Seasearch Contacts:**

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## Editors Notes:

**The Marine Conservation Society** (MCS) is the UK charity dedicated to the protection of our seas, shores and wildlife. Since its formation in 1983, MCS has become a recognised authority on marine and coastal conservation and is regularly consulted by the UK Government and Scottish Government for its views on a range of marine issues. MCS provides information and guidance on many aspects of marine conservation and produces the annual *Good Beach Guide* ([www.goodbeachguide.co.uk](http://www.goodbeachguide.co.uk)) and *Good Fish Guide* ([www.fishonline.org](http://www.fishonline.org)), as well as promoting public participation in volunteer projects and surveys such as *Beachwatch*, *Adopt-a-Beach* and *Basking Shark Watch*. See [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org) for more information.

### **Scottish and UK Marine Bills**

MCS Scotland, through Scottish Environment LINK, has successfully lobbied for a Scottish Government commitment to a Scottish Marine Bill to deliver improved marine protection in Scottish waters. This must have the marine environment at heart and be developed in parallel with a UK Marine Bill. MCS has also lobbied for the UK Government to publish a UK Marine Bill in Spring 2008 to provide better protection for marine species and habitats and establish a governing system for the sustainable management of our seas. Contact Calum Duncan, MCS Scottish Conservation Manager on 0131 226 6360, email [scotland@mcsuk.org](mailto:scotland@mcsuk.org) or visit the LINK Scottish Marine Bill website [www.savescottishseas.org](http://www.savescottishseas.org).

**Seasearch West Scotland.** The Seasearch co-ordinator for West Scotland is Owen Paisley who can be contacted on [seasearch.west@btinternet.com](mailto:seasearch.west@btinternet.com)

**Seasearch North-East Scotland.** The Seasearch co-ordinator for North-East Scotland is Marion Perutz who can be contacted on [seasearch\\_nescotland@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:seasearch_nescotland@yahoo.co.uk)

**Seasearch** is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers in the UK to record observations of marine habitats and the life they support. The information gathered is used to increase our knowledge of life beneath the sea and contribute towards its conservation. Divers can participate in three different levels of recording depending on their knowledge and experience. Seasearch courses are being developed to provide training in marine habitat and species identification and survey methods. Seasearch is co-ordinated nationally by a Steering Group led by the Marine Conservation Society. The Seasearch website contains more information about the programme, including dates of courses and events: [www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk).