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Marine management advice

JNCC advises Government on the major activities that affect nature conservation in the marine environment, including fisheries, extraction of mineral resources and renewable energy

Just as the reporting year started Defra began a public consultation on a proposed Marine Bill. Its consultation document covered a number of areas that touch on JNCC responsibilities, including nature conservation, the future of inshore and recreational fisheries, a proposed system of marine spatial planning and new arrangements for marine licensing and enforcement. The scope of the Bill reflects the fact that many responsibilities for managing the marine environment are devolved.

Our response supported the proposals for an improved system of marine protected areas. We also welcomed the Bill's proposals for a marine planning system and for the establishment of ecosystem objectives to facilitate good management of regulated activities. In March the Government issued its conclusions in *A Sea Change – A Marine Bill White Paper*, to which JNCC will respond.

Fishing is a major pressure on the offshore marine environment. During the year we provided advice on fisheries issues through a number of international bodies, including the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, whose Advisory Committee on Ecosystems is now chaired by JNCC's Mark Tasker.

We attended the annual fishing industry exhibition *Fishing 2006* in Glasgow, along with colleagues from the country agencies. The aim of our contribution was to raise the profile of partnerships that bring fishing, retail and nature conservation stakeholders together to work towards sustainable fisheries.

Throughout the year, JNCC staff were also engaged in providing advice on other offshore industries, including oil and gas and renewable energy.



White shark *Carcharodon carcharias*

(Far left) Many shark species are now in decline, largely as a result of the impact of fishing activity. Three species are already listed in appendices of the Convention on Migratory Species (see section 2) – the white, whale and basking sharks. Proposals for an extension under the Convention of protection to other migratory shark species are to be discussed in the Seychelles in December 2007.

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Rockall

(Left) The island of Rockall and the seabed that surrounds it are a detached section of the European Continental Shelf. Coldwater coral reefs in the relatively shallow waters around the island are of high conservation value.

In 2004, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea expressed its concern about potential damage to coral from fishing activity to the EU and to the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), who between them manage fisheries on Rockall Bank. During the reporting year the EU and NEAFC responded to that concern by closing the Rockall Bank to fishing boats – protecting several thousand square kilometres of coral reef and associated seabed.

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