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Marine Biodiversity Team,
Defra Marine Programme,
Room 1/06, Temple Quay House,
Temple Quay,
Bristol BS1 6EB

06 July 2009

Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation on a Strategy for Marine Protected Areas, Delivering Marine Conservation Zones and European Marine Sites

With reference to your invitation for comments on the above, we would comment as follows:

- 1) We support the principle of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Conservation Zones.
- 2) We recognize the principle of the MCZ and that there may be a need in a few cases to create a Highly Protected Marine Reserve. To allay our concerns we would expect that limitation of access by the Recreational Sea Angling (RSA) sector will be kept to a minimum and where it is limited, this decision will be justified with the use of accurate scientific data, and agreed with the stakeholder group in each case. In particular we note the Minister's announcement of 2nd July 2009.
- 3) We have already communicated with the two MCZ Project groups which are established and have advised them that we will participate as a national organisation representing RSA interests. We will encourage RSA members at a local level to participate in the Steering Groups and the County Working Groups. We will communicate similarly with the other two groups once they are established. As a national body we would be willing to participate at the centre and indeed we have already had dialogue with both the JNCC and NE along those lines. We have also offered to act as a clearing house of good practice in the RSA sector involvement at local level to ensure cohesion in RSA policy to the MPA and MCZ development.
- 4) In respect of the draft document we have serious reservations in the enhancement of IFCA powers to include the power to invoke byelaws on "bait digging". You are well aware the contentious nature this subject evokes. The considerable litigation that has resulted from previous "local" control is an indication of the strength of feeling that this subject generates. Whilst we accept that the IFCAs are to be totally re vamped versions of the SFCs our current experience indicates that there is a lack of involvement by, and awareness of the importance of the RSA sector in IFCAs and we have encountered several recommendations to restrict our activity, and that of legitimate professional diggers, that are neither based on scientific fact nor

impartiality. Some decisions seem to be taken purely to mollify the commercial fishing industry, which have no proven benefits and considerable impact on the social and environmental benefits of RSA. It is difficult to comprehend why the byelaw making powers in the interests of conservation are vested in the MMO but here we have a subject that is so basically a conservation issue yet it is being directed to local governance. We urge you strongly to rescind this direction as there is no subject more emotive than this to the RSA sector. This coupled with the distrust of the SFCs, will in our considered opinion generate animosity to the whole MPA/MCZ programme, from within the recreational sector, and other related initiatives which will detract from the implementation and progression of the concept.

Yours Sincerely

Stuart McPherson
Director Angling Trust
Chairman Marine Committee

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