

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 7 May 2025  
8th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

## PE2034: Stop the current proposals for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HMPAs) in Scotland

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Stuart Chrinside

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to halt their current proposals for Highly Protected Marine Areas and bring forward new proposals that take account of sustainable fishing methods.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2034>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 29 May 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to NatureScot.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from NatureScot, which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 8 September 2023.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 73 signatures have been received on this petition.

### Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**May 2025**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petition**

### **PE2034: Stop the current proposals for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in Scotland**

#### **Petitioner**

Stuart Chirnside

#### **Date Lodged**

20 June 2023

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to halt their current proposals for Highly Protected Marine Areas and bring forward new proposals that take account of sustainable fishing methods.

#### **Previous action**

I have contacted my constituency MSP and regional MSPs, as well as my local MP.

I have also contacted the First Minister and the Minister in charge of the proposals.

MSPs who have spoken on this subject in Parliament have also been contacted to discuss their support and views.

#### **Background information**

The current proposals do not consider sustainable fishing methods, which if managed correctly can provide Scotland with a financially viable fishing industry and will help ensure we continue to have vibrant communities in our coastal areas where life must go on.

Blanket bans are not the way forward.

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2034 on 29 May 2024**

**The Convener:** PE2034, which was lodged by Stuart Chirnside, calls on the Scottish Government to halt its proposals for highly protected marine areas—HPMAs—and to bring forward new proposals that take account of sustainable fishing methods.

We last considered the petition in October last year, when we agreed to write to the Scottish Government seeking an update on its alternative plans to enhance the protection of the marine environment. We have received a response from the Scottish Government confirming that there are no plans to progress the HPMAs proposals, nor is the Government looking to designate 10 per cent of Scotland's seas as highly protected marine areas by 2026.

In response to what the petitioner might feel is validation of their submission, do colleagues have any suggestions for action? I see Mr Ewing flailing around in his seat as he seeks to contribute to our deliberation on the issue.

**Fergus Ewing:** I will add that it has been brought to my attention by fishing representatives that, whereas HPMAs policy, as such, was dropped—after various representations of various types were made to urge the Government so to do—I understand that it is a widely held belief in fishing circles that NatureScot is busily working on that topic to pursue what some feel might be HPMAs by another name. I have not seen the factual basis for that, but I wonder whether we might, to take a belt-and-braces approach, write to NatureScot to ask whether it is doing work in that area, and, if so, what that work is, who has asked it to do it and what role in and input to its deliberations, if any, fishing representatives, such as those representing fishermen in the Clyde and the vicinity, might be having.

**The Convener:** I understand the substance of the question, but I am not sure that it is consistent with the petition that we have before us, which is quite specifically a petition in relation to the Scottish Government. I am not sure that that action would be competent in the sense of being within the reach of the petition itself or whether it would have to be the subject of a fresh petition. However, I am willing to take a view from colleagues on that.

**Maurice Golden:** The petition refers to “the current proposals”. On the face of it, notionally, those proposals have been shelved. If, at the time, the Scottish Government was saying that it would not progress the current proposals, the petition would clearly have to be closed. However, if, at that time, the Scottish Government instructed NatureScot to progress some form of the current proposals, I think that that would fall within the scope of the petition. It might be worth clarifying that aspect with NatureScot. Clearly, if NatureScot is doing that off its own bat—if it is doing it at all—that is a different matter. However, if the Scottish Government has instructed it, we should see the details, because that might fall within the scope of the petition.

**Fergus Ewing:** I was going to make exactly the same point that Mr Golden just made.

**The Convener:** I am outflanked by what I would call that rather tenuous link, which committee members have managed to draw together by a thread. That is fair enough. It will be some time before we consider the petition again. There might have been quicker routes to try to establish all that. However, is that the will of colleagues, including you, Mr Choudhury? That appears to be the case. Thank you. In that case, we will keep the petition open and we will seek to clarify that point.

## **Annexe C: Written submission**

### **NatureScot written submission, 26 June 2024**

#### **PE2034/C: Stop the current proposals for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HMPAs) in Scotland**

We can confirm that NatureScot is not progressing work related to Highly Protected Marine Areas. [Ms McAllan's announcement on 29 June 2023 made it clear that the HMPA proposal would not be progressed](#). We fed into [the Scottish Government's response to the HPMA consultation](#), published on 7 November 2023, which further emphasised the HPMA proposal would not be progressed.

We hope this clarifies the point in question.