

News release from Fair Isle

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Island with a future: marine protection plan as Fair Isle celebrates official opening of Bird Observatory

The community of Fair Isle is celebrating the official opening of the new Fair Isle Bird Observatory this weekend by calling for a Marine Protected Area for the island's waters.

With the support of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust and the National Trust for Scotland, they are drawing up a proposal to the Scottish Government to make the coastal waters a Demonstration and Research MPA.

The new Scottish Marine Bill provides a chance for communities to pioneer marine management methods, aimed at more sustainable use of the marine resource.

Full community support is one of many factors underpinning the proposal. Islanders have been concerned about the breeding failure of some seabirds. Fair Isle has one of the UK's largest seabird colonies. The health and productivity of the marine environment is vital, to ensure that it stays that way.

They say the new bird observatory, with its excellent research facilities, as well as local expertise and the substantive information already collected, mean the qualities of their marine environment, culture and maritime heritage can be interpreted and made available.

They also congratulate the bird observatory trust for its considerable investment in the new building and its determination to secure its future.

“For more than 60 years the observatory and staff have been an essential element of our island community,” says islander Fiona Mitchell. “The observatory work not only draws attention to our rich environment but also plays a large part in the socio-economic well-being and stability of the community by attracting visitors to Fair Isle, and to Shetland.”

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