



MARINE PROTECTION PROJECT OFFICER, CRAIGNISH

BACKGROUNDER FOR CANDIDATES

About Craignish Restoration of Marine and Coastal Habitats (CROMACH)

CROMACH was established in 2017 to give voice to local communities to bring about effective marine management. The Group aims to encourage and promote sustainable use of local waters for recreation, fishing and other marine activities, to promote and carry out research, surveys and investigations of the local marine environment, to involve the community and raise awareness of marine issues and the related cultural heritage, to educate and involve younger members of the community and to protect and allow the recovery of biodiversity and natural processes in Loch Craignish, the Sound of Jura and the Firth of Lorn, the seas of Scotland and the wider marine environment.

Email

info@cromach.org

Website

<https://www.cromach.org/>

The community group soon grew, with a working committee of eight meeting around once a month and over 50 members drawn from the local community. It worked closely with the [Coastal Communities Network](#) and launched initiatives like a Skate Egg Hunt and a guide to help locals spot illegal trawling and dredging on the edge of the MPA. It worked with a neighbouring conservation group, [Friends of the Sound of Jura](#), to campaign successfully against a proposed new fish farm site at Dounie, by Crinan.

CROMACH ran many community and youth education events and citizen science coastal projects, raised money for diving equipment and training to conduct new surveys of the loch, working with [Seasearch](#). The group also hosted films, talks and discussions for the community in the Craignish Village Hall.

CROMACH also came together with other Argyll communities to successfully achieve the first Mission Blue Hope Spot in Scotland and mainland UK, the [Argyll Coast and Islands Hope Spot](#). Hope Spots are a catalyst to greater understanding, appreciation and protection of our marine environment, and they have a global reach. Collectively, they can help to protect and restore marine biodiversity on a local, regional, national and international scale. However, this designation confers no powers to restrict or deliver activity.

In 2019, with funding from [Sea-Change](#), and supported by [Lochnell Oysters](#), CROMACH ran a successful pilot study demonstrating the potential to restore native oysters in the loch. The success of the pilot led to the formation of the charity [Seawilding](#) which launched a community-driven project to establish a million native oysters in Loch Craignish. This project is now about halfway to completion. With the help of community volunteers and marine scientists, Seawilding is also now attempting to restore and enlarge seagrass beds in the loch. Seagrass and native oysters are Priority Marine Features (PMFs) which, once widespread in the loch (& elsewhere), have all but disappeared. In the meantime, Seawilding's activities are being replicated across Scotland with a huge amount of scientific and community engagement.

In 2021 CROMACH conducted a survey on attitudes to, and aspirations for Loch Craignish. At a meeting in the Craignish Village Hall CROMACH presented the community with the results which were overwhelmingly in favour of protection. At the same meeting CROMACH recommended that, of the forms of protection currently available, a Demonstration & Research Marine Protected Area (D&R MPA) was the most promising.

Please read [**CROMACH Community Survey Report – 'Mon the Fish**](#)

D&R MPA Background

In 2010, the provision for Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Areas (D&R MPAs) was introduced for Scotland's territorial waters, providing a flexible and unique option for non-state parties in Scotland to put forward their own proposals for MPAs which would specifically test sustainable marine management approaches.

There is only one D&R MPA currently, granted in 2016 to the Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI). **Please read this case study** as it is key to understanding the nature of a D&R MPA and the challenges involved.

DR MPAs have the potential to be a powerful vehicle for community-led marine protection in Scotland. They are a relatively untested form of marine management, and thus there is a vast, as yet untapped, potential in their application and impact.

DR MPAs may overlap with other (existing or new) MPAs or be spatially distinct. They are typically time limited and will not automatically form a component of the MPA network, only where they are considered to contribute conservation value, and then only for the duration of the designation. However, the approaches being trialled within the D&R MPA may be implemented on a longer-term basis in that area or replicated elsewhere.

D&R MPAs will not necessarily introduce formal restrictions on existing activities (for example, if they can be considered sustainable) however they may be introduced if they are necessary to support the demonstration or the research objectives of the site. Guidelines recommend that all D&R MPA proposals should consider if the objectives can be achieved through arrangements such as voluntary agreements and stakeholder agreements.

CROMACH believe that, having received the broad support of the community and the majority of local stakeholders, D&R MPA status is suitable for Loch Craignish for the following reasons:

Because of

- 1) the exceptional level of local commitment to improving and restoring the loch
- 2) the typical mix of local, leisure and commercial use, plus
- 3) the success of our native oyster and seagrass restoration projects so far,

we believe that a D&R MPA for Loch Craignish would enable an innovative community-led management group to:

- Restore and increase biodiversity and PMFs in the loch
- Benchmark, monitor and report on this via a range of academic collaborations
- Create a replicable model for community and stakeholder coastal cooperation
- Create a replicable community-driven commercial model for aquaculture and fisheries
- Promote awareness and knowledge via citizen science and activities with young people
- Explore and share new restoration techniques
- Create long-term high-quality ecotourism and restoration jobs.

Project Officer Role & Responsibilities

CROMACH is now keen to develop a proposal for this D&R MPA. As we are a small volunteer group with limited time, and in order to ensure a balanced and independent proposal which is clearly feasible, we have decided to contract the development of the proposal to an independent consultant working as 'MPA Project Officer'. We have successfully applied for funding for this role through the [Fauna & Flora International \(FFI\) Community Support Fund](#).

Working closely with CROMACH, Seawilding, FFI, Nature Scot and others over a period of 3-6 months, the MPA Project Officer would

- Clarify the key aims and objectives in taking forward this form of protection and define stakeholder categories and contact details with CROMACH and Seawilding.
- Set up and deliver stakeholder consultations/focus groups with assistance from CROMACH and Seawilding
- Engage and consult constructively with all stakeholders. (Note, this would include national associations as well as local operators.)
- Summarise the results of these consultations to CROMACH and Seawilding
- Based on stakeholder consultations, make recommendations to the CROMACH Committee on appropriate governance and management of the loch for the long term
- Develop draft and final reports and proposals to stakeholders and community and obtain sign-off from CROMACH and Seawilding.

Timeframe

The following project milestones have been agreed with the committee and funders

- May 2022 – set up stakeholder consultations/focus groups.
- June 2022- draft initial research objectives and circulate to look for consensus.
- July 2022 - prepare recommendations on governance.
- August 2022 –draft proposal
- September 2022 – final proposal

Key Output: D&R MPA Proposal for Loch Craignish

We envisage the proposal to be a 20-30pp document which covers the following topics:

- a portfolio of the loch's environmental and community characteristics
- background on why a D&R MPA is being proposed; vision & objectives
- a map of key stakeholders and their concerns/aspirations (community survey)
- a proposed 'demonstration and research' implementation programme
- proposals for ongoing monitoring and governance.

The proposal will be addressed to Marine Scotland, and as such it is critical that it meets the criteria established by them, which are listed in Appendix 1 of the above [case study](#) "Criterion and Sub-Criterion for Demonstration and Research MPAs in Scotland."

Consultant Profile

The selected consultant should have demonstrable expertise in researching and writing similar proposals and be willing to share these with the CROMACH D&R MPA Steering Group as part of the selection process. While qualifications in marine biology/sustainability studies are not necessary, they would be an advantage. The ability to assess and summarise stakeholder views

and formulate a practical set of proposals that will be acceptable to all parties and to Marine Scotland within a set time frame are the critical requirements.

Budget

Total funding for the project is £10,600. Around 10% (£1060) will be set aside for costs – e.g. travel & subsistence, venue hire, printing – leaving a total budget for consultant fees of £9540. This translates to, for instance, 47 days @ £200 a day which would create a part-time role (three days a week) for 16 weeks. Fees will be paid against detailed invoices monthly in arrears. Please note that it will not be possible to exceed this budget.

Contact Details

CROMACH has established a Steering Group to support and oversee the first stages of the D&R MPA application process. Sally MacLeod is the admin volunteer for the role and will coordinate between candidates and the CROMACH selection committee. Please provide CVs, etc. to her:

Sally Macleod
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