

MPA NEWS



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Letter to the Editor

Dear MPA News:

John Clark is right to be concerned about the closure of areas to fishing and other activities ("Letter to the Editor" [MPA News 5:1](#)). No-take zones should not be seen as the answer to all our management failures. Our focus needs to be on the use of a suite of MPA tools (including closed areas, sustainable multi-use areas, and wider sea-use planning) in relation to the future stewardship of the marine environment.

It is important to remember, however, that controlled and balanced use (sustainable development) does not necessarily protect the structure and function of marine ecosystems or indeed allow for recovery of degraded environments. This is why we need closed areas. The controversy that often surrounds closed areas means that their location and subsequent monitoring usually require full justification, an awareness-raising campaign, and the involvement of local communities and the wider public - much more so than for multi-use areas. This can't be a bad thing!

I disagree with Dr. Clark's comment that closed areas are easier to execute: it has taken four years to reach agreement with local fishermen on the UK's first statutory no-take zone (Lundy Island) - a site that is not intensively fished. There is also much evidence from overseas of representative areas programs taking many years to implement.

The way we see things potentially progressing in the UK is that rather than re-invent the marine conservation wheel, we make the most of existing legislation including the European Union's Habitats Directive (which we have already used to designate 23 marine Special Areas of Conservation in England) to appropriately zone our sustainable multi-use sites to include closed areas. Where an ecologically coherent network of sites is concerned, some of these closed areas may well need to be outside of our existing multi-use sites.

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