Annual Review 2013

Protecting our seas, shores and wildlife
The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) is the UK’s leading charity for the protection of our seas, shores and wildlife.

MCS champions a vision of sustainable fisheries, abundant marine life and clean seas and beaches for the enjoyment of all. No mean feat in light of the ever growing demand for natural resources, and conflicting pressures on the public purse. However, over the past year, marine issues were as high as ever on the agenda from reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to the first steps towards an effective network of Marine Protected Areas in UK waters.

MCS has been at the forefront of these and many other initiatives, working at the international, UK, national and local levels in our own right and alongside partners to influence positive changes in government policy and business practice to achieve our goals.

Our seas and coasts are vital to our way of life and to many livelihoods, and MCS believes the key to safeguarding the health and prosperity of our seas is to promote change on a much wider scale through involvement, community engagement and influential campaigning.

Engaging people in all that we do has always been at the heart of MCS and this year has been no exception. Over 10,000 volunteers have helped clean and survey litter on our beaches to inform our campaigns to reduce litter at source – including our President, HRH The Prince of Wales! 2,000 people turned out on a freezing February morning to march on Westminster and support our call for a network of Marine Conservation Zones in English seas. Over 20,000 children have learnt about our seas through the Cool Seas Roadshow and collected bottle tops to promote recycling.

Our key achievements over the year are outlined in this review and we could not hope to achieve all that we do without the generous support of so many individuals and organisations and to all who have supported us we would like to say thank you for being part of the movement to save our seas.

Sam Fanshawe
Chief Executive

Footnote: This summary review describes some of the key activities and outcomes of the Marine Conservation Society’s (MCS) work during the year 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013. It cannot be exhaustive, especially for a year of such considerable activity, but full information, together with detailed financial statements are reported in the full audited statutory accounts available from MCS Head Office.
Vision

**Seas fit for life** - clean seas and coasts that support abundant marine life, healthy fish stocks and enjoyment for all.

Mission

To achieve measurable improvements in the state of our seas, marine biodiversity and fish stocks through changes in government policy, industry practice and individual behaviour.

Approach

We believe that key drivers for change are to inform and involve people, communities and stakeholders in our work and influence decision makers and businesses through public engagement and collaboration, as well as through direct advocacy and campaigns.
2012/13 Highlights

**Inspired**

- **15,500 children** in 75 schools across the UK to learn more about our ‘Cool Seas’.
- **2,000 people** to take part in a march on Parliament calling for a network of Marine Conservation Zones in English seas.
- **8,900 pupils** to collect 179,580 plastic bottle tops for recycling into sports kits, as part of the Bottle Champions scheme.

**Informed**

- **Millions of people** on marine conservation issues with over 4,200 features in print media, national and regional radio and TV.
- **160,000 consumers** on sustainable seafood choices, with the MCS Fish to Eat and Fish to Avoid, Pocket Good Fish Guide, Good Fish Guide Website and iPhone App.
- **500,000 beach users** on the water quality of 754 beaches through the Good Beach Guide, allowing them to make informed choices on where to go.
Involved

- **3,500 volunteers** in the UK-wide annual MCS Beachwatch litter survey collecting over 181,978 items of litter from 238 beaches.
- **6,000 volunteers** in the first Big Beach Clean Up in partnership with Marks & Spencer, clearing over 3,500 bags of litter from 100 beaches.
- **40,000 people** in voicing their opinion on marine protected areas through our Marine Conservation Zone campaign.
- **185 new Sea Champions** recruited and 3,000 volunteer hours given to actively support marine conservation in their local area.

Influenced

- Governments in England, Scotland and Wales to maintain support for delivering an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas.
- Government to change its approach to ensure it is correctly applying the Habitats Directive to protect our European Marine Sites from damaging fishing activities.
- Government to champion radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.
- The aquaculture industry and European Parliament on the importance of sourcing alternative sustainable feeds for farmed fish.
- Major supermarkets, catering companies, restaurants and fish and chip shops to stop selling any fish from the MCS Fish to Avoid list, and promoted the diversification of fish consumption to more sustainable choices.
Protecting marine life
The oceans are losing their biodiversity at an increasing rate, with formerly abundant species like common skate and Atlantic halibut being listed as critically endangered. Globally, marine reserves are proving to be effective at increasing populations of fish and shellfish and allowing habitats to recover from over-exploitation. But, in the UK, less than 1% of our seas are fully protected from all damaging activities, and MCS believes that 30% is needed to provide adequate protection for biodiversity and commercially important species to thrive.

Protecting our seas biodiversity
After successfully campaigning for the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, MCS has focused on ensuring an ecologically coherent network (ECN) of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) will be created.

In England, the government consulted on 31 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) drawn from the 127 sites identified by a stakeholder-led process. 31 sites is not a network and so through advocacy, lobbying and public engagement, MCS mobilised thousands of members of the public to show support for a full network. 40,000 pledges and over 4,000 consultation responses later, 1,500 supporters joined our MCZ March on Westminster led by celebrity chef and campaigner, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

In Scotland, MCS was part of the stakeholder process to identify MPAs for key threatened and declining species and habitats. Our lobbying ensured all 33 MPA proposals were taken forward to 2013 consultation.

In Wales, MCS participated in the group set up to review MCZs and input to the advice given to the Minister. We gave evidence to the National Assembly for Wales enquiry on marine policy. The main recommendations were that marine policy in Wales is under prioritised and under resourced, findings that have been accepted by Welsh Government.
Alongside colleagues from ClientEarth, MCS continued to challenge Defra and the Marine Management Organisation to ensure effective implementation of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives, to protect European Marine Sites from damaging activities. Currently, the impacts of certain fishing activities are only dealt with after damage has been caused. We believe that a more systematic and proactive approach is needed to protect sites before damage happens. This would require the fishing industry to fall into line with other industry sectors that are already required to undertake appropriate assessments of their impact when seeking to carry out their activities in sites protected under the Habitats Directive. In July 2012, MCS finally received acknowledgement that Defra would be changing its approach to protecting the most vulnerable habitats from damage. MCS has continued to inform this process through the Implementation Group to ensure that this change in approach is translated into protection at a local level.

MCS continues to do all it can to ensure that the UK implements the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to achieve Good Environmental Status for our seas. MCS led on a joint NGO response to a consultation on the definition and targets for Good Environmental Status, providing expert input on fisheries, pollution and biodiversity.

Wildlife surveys
Wildlife reporting schemes for basking sharks, turtles and jellyfish continued to engage the public and developments to the online reporting pages now enables live updates on the distribution of sightings.

The Seasearch partnership project, coordinated by MCS and run in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust, statutory nature conservation bodies and others, trained volunteer divers in marine habitat and species surveys and gathered over 1,850 site records including data from proposed MCZs in England.

Protecting turtles
Overseas, the MCS Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Turtle Project completed its investigation of the legal turtle harvest there and the resulting marine turtle management plan was presented to the TCI Government in March 2013, leading to the protection of all large and breeding turtles in TCI waters.
Turtle tracking in TCI © Amdeep Sanghera
Dahlia anemone & lightbulb squirts © Paul Naylor
Basking shark sighting in Sennen © Andy Pearson
Marching for 127 MCZs © Alex Caminada
Sustainable aquaculture and fisheries
The problem
The European Commission reports that more than 72% of EU fish stocks are overfished against a global average of 28%. In 2011, just 1 in 5 stocks around the UK were in a healthy state. As a result, the number of fish being caught is inevitably declining and now half of all fish for human consumption is raised on farms. Against this background both wild-capture and aquaculture production remained priorities for MCS action.

Consumer awareness
As declines in fish stocks continue and public awareness grows, the MCS Fishonline and Good Fish Guide websites, pocket guides and iPhone app, which include lists of Fish to Eat and Fish to Avoid, have become the UK’s key source of information on sustainable seafood.

The Fishonline and Good Fish Guide websites provide advice to UK consumers and industry on over 150 species of seafood, giving a rating of 1-5 dependent on the relative sustainability of different stocks and fishing or farming methods used for each species. Over 150,000 Pocket Good Fish Guides were distributed to members of the public and a further 15,000 were downloaded from our website.

Sustainable fisheries management
The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is at a crucial stage and MCS has lobbied alongside other NGOs calling for a policy that: ensures stocks are managed, restored to levels which can be sustainably exploited, ends the wasteful practice of discarding, minimises bycatch, addresses the issues of over capacity, ensures that resources are fairly distributed, and encourages environmental improvements.

International work continued on managing coral reef fisheries in the Maldives and in the Tun Sakaran Marine Park in Malaysia to eliminate fish blasting and involve local communities in reef regeneration projects.
Sustainable aquaculture
The way that farmed fish are fed and raised creates a number of conservation issues. Salmon and trout, which are both farmed in the UK, and warm-water prawn, sea bass and bream are all carnivorous species that are popular with UK consumers and depend on having fish oil and fishmeal in their diet, originally sourced from wild fish. About a third of all wild-capture fisheries are used to make non-human food, a large proportion for farmed fish to eat. New sources of non-marine oil and non-fish protein based diets require development and promotion to alleviate this problem, and in response MCS has formed partnership programmes with fish farmers, feed manufacturers and retailers to promote and support development of alternative feeds.

MCS continued to play a key influential role on the International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Organisation (IFFO) certification committee in shaping an international standard to assess the responsible sourcing and production of fishmeal and fish oil. Since the scheme started in 2011, approximately 40% of reduction fisheries are certified as responsible. MCS also sits on the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) Standards Oversight Committee to influence the development and application of new and existing production standards and an Innovation Award proposed by MCS was launched at the 2012 GAA conference.
Clean **seas** and **beaches**
The problem
Beaches are where many of us have some of our most memorable and treasured encounters with nature and yet increasingly it is the unnatural or unwanted that can now be found there. Pollution from chemicals, sewage, oil and litter is not only a threat to marine life, it can also contaminate the fish we eat and ruin the natural beauty of our coasts.

The MCS Beachwatch and Good Beach Guide campaigns are the authoritative voice on how litter and sewage affect Britain’s seas and beaches and how individuals, Government and industry must act to reduce pollution around our coastline.

Turning the tide on litter
Our flagship event, Beachwatch Big Weekend 2012, involved over 3,500 volunteers collecting 181,978 litter items from 238 beaches around the UK. With an average of 2,007 items of litter per km of beach surveyed, sadly there is no sign that levels of litter are falling.

The issue gains the attention and support of a wide audience and we welcomed our President, HRH The Prince of Wales, to a beach clean event in Northumberland in July 2012 to thank some of the incredible volunteers that have regularly cleaned and surveyed their beaches for years.

The data on litter quantities, types and sources gathered through Beachwatch Big Weekend and other surveys throughout the year, is used at national and international levels to inform and promote actions by government, industry and the public to stop litter at source.

Influencing government
MCS has lobbied the UK Government and devolved administrations for many years to take action on the litter issue, and our efforts are at last taking effect. Following lobbying by MCS, the Scottish Government consulted on a marine litter strategy in 2012 and the Northern Ireland executive has made a commitment to do the same in 2014. These commitments have added

MCS strategic goals:
- Litter levels on UK beaches reduced by 25% on 2008 levels.
- Water quality at 75% of UK bathing waters achieve the MCS Recommended standard.
weight to our call for a litter strategy and plastic bag levy to be introduced in England, which has been a main focus of our Break the Bag Habit campaign in conjunction with other NGOs.

Plastic bags can pose a particular threat to animals, particularly seabirds and turtles that eat them mistaking them for food. MCS promotes voluntary initiatives such as Plastic Bag Free towns but has also been lobbying for retailers to reduce their use through a charge. MCS was instrumental in persuading the Welsh Government to follow Ireland’s example and introduce a charge in 2011. One year on, bag usage had decreased by up to 90%. MCS has given evidence to the Northern Ireland executive and Scottish Government and both will introduce a levy on plastic bags in April 2013 and 2014 respectively.

**Sewage–free seas**
MCS has published an annual Good Beach Guide since 1987, acting as a key driver for investment in sewage treatment and improved water quality standards around the UK. The Guide now provides online information on the water quality and sewage discharges at UK beaches to help people decide where and whether to bathe. In May 2012, the 25th anniversary of the MCS Good Beach Guide recommended the highest number of UK beaches in the guide’s history. 516 had excellent bathing water quality out of 754 tested. However, 46 beaches failed to meet the basic Mandatory standard, despite the ongoing and significant investment made in sewage treatment. This highlighted the need to address the problem of discharges from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and MCS will be increasing its focus on this area to promote additional measures needed to reduce CSO discharges.
The 2012 Good Beach Guide was published online, with information on the water quality and sewage discharges at UK beaches.
Inspiring future generations
Involving and inspiring young people to take an active interest in marine life and protection of our seas is the key to the long-term success of our campaigns. The MCS Cool Seas Roadshow featured life-sized marine animal models and tailored resources for teachers and children. There was also the first tour of a new Cool Seas Puppet Roadshow, with the Lempen Puppet Theatre and their interpretation of the ‘Fishermen and the Pearl’ story. These highly visual and memorable roadshows visited 75 schools and events throughout the year, and reached over 15,000 children throughout the UK. A virtual Cool Seas Roadshow - an interactive website – was launched to engage and enthuse an even wider audience of young people about our seas.

The Bottle Champions recycling challenge in partnership with Plastics 2020 continued with schools encouraged to collect and recycle plastic bottles, in return for which they can earn a sports kit made from recycled plastic; 39 schools participated and pupils saved an incredible 179,580 bottle tops from going to landfill.

Sea Champions
Thanks to funding from Marks & Spencer through the Forever Fish partnership, our Sea Champions volunteer programme went from strength to strength during the year. By March 2013, 221 volunteers had become MCS Sea Champions taking local action for marine conservation and:

- delivered 5,000 volunteer hours of support for MCS
- attended 160 community outreach events
- engaged with 15,000 members of the public at events
- collected almost 7,000 pledges of support for our MCZ campaign

Media reach
MCS’ reach to people throughout the UK has continued to grow and the charity’s activities were reported in a record number of features – over 4,296 - in the press and broadcast media with an estimated audience of 318 million. MCS continued to provide expertise and comment for a wide range of broadcast programmes, including BBC’s The One Show, Newsround, Springwatch, Autumnwatch and Channel 4’s Fish Fight series.

MCS’ online presence continued to attract in excess of 100,000 unique visitors per month, across its four websites. Our social networking activities have been especially successful with the number of followers on both Facebook (13,083) and Twitter (9,771) almost doubling again over the past year.
MCS’ capacity to deliver on its ambitious conservation programme has continued in 2012/13, with sustained investment from two important restricted funding streams. These are allowing MCS to maintain the development of long-term sustainable fundraising and marketing activities to underpin future growth.

Whilst this represents a significant level of support for MCS, the restricted nature of this support means that MCS will still rely on and solicit generous donations to support our ongoing activities and to cover our core costs for the vital conservation work we undertake.
The Marine Conservation Society would like to thank all the individuals and organisations that have supported the Society’s work in the period to 31st March 2013.

Organisations, companies, charitable trusts and foundations giving grants of £1,000 or more towards specific conservation projects:

- Big Blue Limited
- British Plastics Federation
- Bernard Sunley Foundation
- Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Darwin Challenge Fund
- Defra
- D’Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
- Ernest Cook Trust
- Environment Wales
- Global Ocean
- IFFO
- J & JR Wilson Trust
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Marks & Spencer Plc
- Natural England
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- Peoples Trust for Endangered Species
- Phoenix Charitable Trust
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Scottish Environment Link
- Scottish Midland Co-operative
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- The Craignish Trust
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Organisations and companies supporting MCS with contributions of £1,000 or more in unrestricted funds:

- BlackRock
- Debenhams
- EDF Energy
- EWOS Ltd
- Fat Face Foundation
- Green Insurance Company
- Harbour Lights Fish & Chips
- Harbour & Jones
- Loch Duart Ltd
- Loch Fyne Oysters
- Marks & Spencer Plc
- Mischief Slide Promotions
- Parkdean Holiday Parks Ltd
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- Rudding Gates
- Slice Promotions
- Toyota
- Turtle Mat Company
- Wandle Scuba Diving Club
- Waitrose
Charitable and company trusts giving a donation of £500 or more:

- Anson Charitable Trust
- Barker Charitable Trust Ltd
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- Diana Edgson Wright Charitable Trust
- Dischma Charity Trust
- Donald Forrester Trust
- Dr L H A Pilkington Charitable Trust
- Gilbert & Eileen Edgar Foundation
- Golden Bottle Trust
- Hugh Fraser Foundation
- John Cowan Foundation
- Lady Hind Trust
- Langdale Trust
- Lady Eileen Joseph Foundation
- Marsh Christian Trust
- Martin Connell Charitable Trust
- Mary Heap Charitable Trust
- Millichope Foundation
- Montague Paton Trust
- N Smith Charitable Settlement
- Peacock Charitable Trust
- Percy Hedley Charitable Trust
- Pilkington Charity Fund
- Portrack Charity Trust
- Saints & Sinners Trust
- Sir John Fisher Foundation
- The Annandale Charitable Trust
- The Arnold Burton 1998 Charitable Trust
- The Blair Foundation
- The Joseph Strong Frazer Trust
- The Misses Barrie Charitable Trust
- The Mitchell Trust
- The PP Mackintosh Foundation
- The Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust
- The Spears Charitable Trust
- The St Mary’s Charity
- The White Blossom Trust
- Thomas Lilley Memorial Trust
- Waynflete Charitable Trust
- William Dean Trust
- Woodpecker Trust

MCS expresses its gratitude to the many Trusts who granted other donations or wish to remain anonymous.
Legacies:

Donations were gratefully received in memory of Mr J Aird, Dr J B Allan, Ms V A Buckle, Miss V G Cumming, Ms E Dodwell, Mr B Eaton, Ms O Fidler, Mr R G Hackers, Ms D Hillyer, Mr M Hoskin, Ms Lidyard, Mr D de Lancey, Ms L Poolwell, Ms M Stoddart, Mr Wilson.

Patrons, supporters, members and groups:

MCS would like to thank its members, Local Groups and Sea Champions for their support and fundraising effort over the year. Thanks also to all the volunteers who supported MCS projects and/or gathered vital information through Beachwatch, Seasearch, Jellyfish, Basking Shark and Turtle Watch and who supported our calls to action for Marine Protected Areas in England, Scotland and Wales. Also to the many individual and community participants, dive clubs, sports clubs, youth and member organisations and school and college students who raised money to support the work of the Marine Conservation Society.
Tribute to Bernard Eaton, Marine Conservation Society Founder

In October 2012, MCS sadly paid fond tribute to founder and Vice-President, Bernard Eaton who died at the age of 86. Bernard set up DIVER, the magazine for British Sub Aqua Club members in the 1960s, and driven by his passion for the underwater world and concern about the state of Britain’s seas, Bernard was inspired to organise an “Underwater Conservation Year” in 1977 to “promote the study and protection of natural and historical features of the underwater environment of value and interest to mankind”.

Together with his good friend, Professor David Bellamy, they brought together marine biologists and professionals from the diving, research and government bodies to form a working party. Bernard had the foresight to invite His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to become President of the Underwater Conservation Year and, the following year, the Underwater Conservation Society was set up.

It was Bernard’s determination and vision that kept the Underwater Conservation Society going, secured funds and ultimately established the Marine Conservation Society charity in 1983.

Bernard’s passion for Britain’s sea life and vision for the study of marine habitats and species in order to protect them for future generations created the foundations of the Marine Conservation Society and he was actively involved in the Society’s work throughout his lifetime.

A pioneer in marine conservation, Bernard leaves an inspirational legacy for all divers and marine naturalists and is remembered with great fondness and sincere appreciation for his significant contribution to the protection of our seas, shores and wildlife.
Support MCS today and be part of the movement to save our seas

Our wonderful seas, shores and wildlife are under threat, but it’s not too late. Thousands of people just like you are helping us ensure our rich marine life can be restored, that fish stocks can recover and our beaches and bathing waters can become clean once again.

Together, we can achieve so much

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Registered Charity No (England and Wales): 1004005
Registered Charity No (Scotland): SC037480

Join us by setting up a regular donation
www.mcsuk.org/membership - 0300 3300 704

Adopt a Turtle for yourself or as a gift
www.mcsuk.org/adopt - 01989 566017

Get involved and volunteer for a beach clean
www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch - 01989 566017

Save our seas as a Sea Champion volunteer
www.mcsuk.org/seachampions - 01989 561573

Do something amazing as an MCS fundraiser
www.mcsuk.org/url/fundraise - 01989 566017