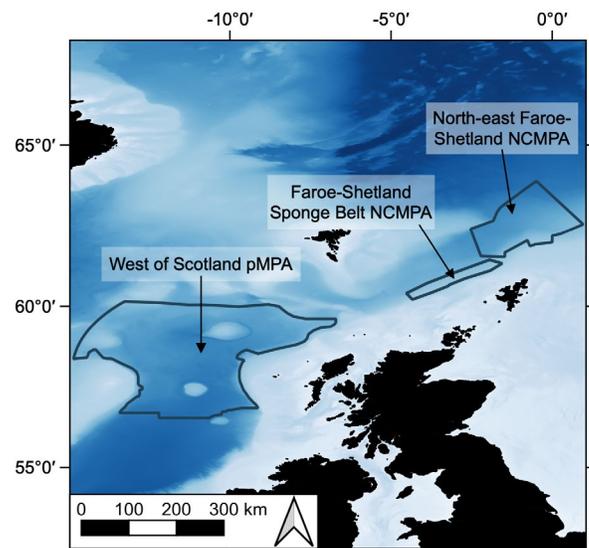


Faroe-Shetland Channel/West of Scotland pMPA Case Study

The Dynamics and Properties of Marine Systems Theme within MASTS are funding a Case Study on the Atlantic approaches to the Scottish continental shelf and slope, coordinated by U Edinburgh, MSS and JNCC. The case study will include the Faroe-Shetland Channel (FSC) region and the West of Scotland possible Marine Protected Area (pMPA). As part of the case study, a workshop of four online sessions will be held to review the existing scientific knowledge, identify research gaps and determine how the MASTS community can drive forward research in both geographic areas. Outputs from these will then be summarised in one or more publications.

The Faroe-Shetland Channel (FSC)

Separating the Faroese and Scottish continental shelves, the FSC is one of three pathways where water masses exchange between the Atlantic Ocean and Arctic Mediterranean, creating complex hydrographic conditions with five different water masses. The presence of warmer Atlantic and cooler Arctic waters within the FSC enables the presence of a multitude of key deep-sea habitats and species (such as ocean quahogs, sponges, and polychaetes). In 2014, the Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt and North-east Faroe-Shetland Channel Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas (NCMPAs) were designated to help protect these habitats. The FSC is also a region of economic importance: shipping, fishing and hydrocarbon extraction take place within the channel and telecommunication cables cross it. Over the years, data from the region have been gathered by a wide range of governmental, academic and industrial institutions. With several key projects coming to an end, it is timely to consolidate the knowledge available from the FSC and identify outstanding research priorities.



The West of Scotland pMPA

The West of Scotland pMPA is 107,773 km² in size. It covers a diverse marine landscape to the west of Scotland; from the steep gradient of the continental slope across the sediment plains of the Rockall Trough, to the slopes of George Bligh Bank and Rockall Bank including two isolated seamounts (Anton Dohrn and Rosemary Bank). The deep seas around Scotland are home to some of the most vulnerable habitats and species on earth with deep-sea ecosystems providing a range of benefits to society, including nutrient cycling and carbon storage. The pMPA has been proposed for both habitat (including coral gardens and deep-sea sponge aggregations) and species features (including orange roughy and leafscale gulper sharks), ten of which are on the OSPAR list for threatened and/or declining species & habitats. A video which supported the consultation for the designation of the West of Scotland as a deep-sea marine reserve is available [here](#).

Case Study Workshops

As many of the stakeholders are similar between the two regions, the workshops (from the 17th to the 19th of November 2020) will be organised in a combined manner to explore the key aims, with breakout sessions to aid discussion and explore some of the nuances specific to each individual region. The aims of the workshops are as follows:

- Consolidate the available scientific knowledge available in the region
- Identify knowledge and research gaps, including but not limited to climate change, anthropogenic pressures, and the distribution and life history characteristics of cetaceans, benthic habitats and deep-sea fishes as well as the natural capital and ecosystem services these provide
- Explore options to drive forward research in these areas through the development of a deep-sea science advancement plan
- Develop collaborations across disciplines and sectors to seek future funding

To express your interest in attending, please send a short (50 words or less) paragraph with your potential contribution to masts@st-andrews.ac.uk by the 2nd of October 2020.