

Climate change is having a significant impact on our marine environment according to a new report.

The Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) report card 2007-08 highlights just how much climate change has affected the United Kingdom's marine environment and what the future impacts may be.

Key findings from the report published today include:

- 2006 was the second warmest year for UK coastal waters since records began in 1870; seven of the 10 warmest years have been in the last decade.
- Warmer winters have been strongly linked to reduced breeding success and survival in some seabird populations.
- Models predict fewer storms in future but there will be increased numbers of severe storms
- Coastal erosion and flooding is expected to increase.

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment Richard Lochhead said:

"Climate change, including marine climate change, is one of the most serious threats facing us today. It is a truly global issue and can only be tackled if we work together. Our seas play a vital role in regulating our climate and are a lifeline for the communities that live around them.

"Our winters are getting wetter and warmer, sea levels are rising and coastal erosion is increasing. Our marine wildlife is now having to cope with these as well as other pressures, and is beginning to suffer as a result. Our marine industries also have to cope with changes. These are happening now and we must take action.

"We will shortly be publishing our consultation on proposals for a Scottish Climate Change Bill, including a mandatory target to achieve an 80 per cent reduction in Scottish emissions by 2050.

"The Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) annual report card paints a disturbing picture. But MCCIP are playing a vital role in helping us understand what we need to do to tackle the problem of climate change."

Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs, said:

"The report card is a vital piece in the jigsaw of evidence we need to help us to combat climate change.

"Healthy seas are central to our wellbeing, shaping our climate as well as providing food and livelihoods.

"The MCCIP project shows the value of working together to protect the marine environment and to find sustainable solutions to the challenges we all face."

Other key findings from the report include:

- Marine climate change is having a significant impact on the marine environment and the goods and services it provides.

- Coastal erosion is occurring along 17 per cent of the UK coastline (30 per cent of England's coastline; 23 per cent of Wales; 20 per cent of Northern Ireland; 12 per cent Scotland).
- Recent warmer conditions and associated shifts in the abundance and geographical distribution of plankton have led to reduced availability of prey fish for some seabirds, which has been strongly linked to recent poor breeding success and reduced survival rates.
- The impacts of climate change on the commercial services provided by our seas will be significant. Sea-level rise, coastal flooding, storms and bigger waves will affect ports, shipping and built structures. Fishing and fish farming will be affected by temperature change and plankton (prey) availability.

Notes for news editors

1. The launch of this Annual Report Card is being hosted by the Scottish Government. Contributing scientists, key decision makers and a wide range of marine environment stakeholders have been invited to the launch on Wednesday 16 January at Victoria Quay, Edinburgh.

Media are also invited to attend. The details are:

11:40 - 12:00	Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment Richard Lochhead, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Stewart Stevenson and Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs Jonathan Shaw will be available for interview.
12:00 - 13:00	Launch of the report card.

Professor John Croxall, Chair of BirdLife International's Global Seabird Programme, will also address the launch event.

1. Detailed briefings on all the topics covered in the report card can be found on the MCCIP website www.mccip.org.uk/arc The MCCIP Secretariat is contactable on 01502 524 508 and office@mccip.org.uk
2. The Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) was launched in March 2005 and is a partnership between scientists, Government, its agencies, and NGOs. The principal aim is to develop a long term approach to understanding and communicating the implications of climate change in our seas.
3. Sponsoring partners are:
 - Defra
 - Scottish Government
 - Welsh Assembly Government
 - Department of the Environment Northern Ireland
 - Environment Agency
 - Natural England
 - Countryside Council for Wales

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- States of Guernsey
- States of Jersey
- WWF - UK

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