



Date: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**  
– for immediate issue

## ***OPEN DAYS IN CORNWALL WILL HELP DECIDE THE FUTURE OF OUR SEAS***

People in Cornwall who use the sea for work or pleasure are being encouraged to take part in the most comprehensive survey of marine activity ever undertaken in the south-west.

The **Finding Sanctuary** project aims to map the usage of our waters as part of a move to create Marine Conservation Zones to help ensure a healthy and productive future for the region's coasts and seas. Britain's first and only Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) was designated last month in the seas off Lundy Island. Further MCZs are to be designated in 2012. Anyone who wants to know more about the project or has comments to make is invited to attend one of two **Drop-in Days being held in the county**.

**The Bude Drop-in Day is on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February from 10am – 8pm at the Bude Tourist Information Centre, Crescent Car Park, EX23 8LE.**

**The Penzance Drop-in Day is on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March from 10am – 8pm at the Fishermans Mission, Newlyn, Penzance TR18 5JB .**

Former fisherman Spike Searle who is the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly liaison officer for Finding Sanctuary said; "I would encourage as many people as possible who use the sea - whether it's commercially or for leisure interests - to share their information and observations from around the Cornish coastline. This will ensure that local people have a say in the important planning of the new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)."

As well as collating information from the region's sea users, Finding Sanctuary is working with the local Cornwall Marine Protected Area (MPA) Group to ensure that Marine Conservation Zones are created with full local participation. The Cornwall MPA Group is represented on the regional Finding Sanctuary Steering Group which includes representatives from all south-west counties and a wide range of marine sectors. It is this Steering Group that will make recommendations for Marine Conservation Zones to the Government.

The Finding Sanctuary research will be used by the Steering Group to decide where Marine Conservation Zones should be placed, so that they do not unnecessarily impact how people use the sea. New Marine Conservation Zones will be formally designated by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 2012 and will help the Government fulfil its national and international commitments to create an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas.

Anyone who wishes to contribute to The Finding Sanctuary project should visit [www.finding-sanctuary.org](http://www.finding-sanctuary.org) for further information or contact Spike Searle on 07815 942 420 or Email: [spike@finding-sanctuary.org](mailto:spike@finding-sanctuary.org)

**ENDS**

## Notes to Editors

**Photographs attached for use with this release only.**

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### Background information:

- ***Finding Sanctuary*** is a partnership project between South West Food and Drink, the South West Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, National Trust, Natural England, JNCC and the County Councils of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset.
  
- **Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)** are a new type of Marine Protected Area (MPA) being introduced through the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act. MCZs will be implemented to protect nationally important marine wildlife, habitats, geology and geomorphology. Sites will be selected both inshore and offshore, up to mean high water to protect the full range of marine life. MCZs will have a range of protection levels that reflect the level to which a particular habitat or wider ecosystem needs to be safeguarded.
  
- The waters off Lundy Island were designated Britain's first Marine Conservation Zone in January 2010.
  
- MCZs together with other types of Marine Protected Area (MPA), will make up an ecologically coherent **network of Marine Protected Areas**. This means the MPA network will be a collection of areas that work together to provide more benefits than an individual area could on its own.
  
- *Finding Sanctuary* is one of four regional projects which together make up the **Marine Conservation Zone Project**. The Marine Conservation Zone project has been established by Defra, Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to identify and recommend Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) to Government. The four regional MCZ projects cover the south-west (*Finding Sanctuary*), Irish Sea (Irish Sea Conservation Zones), North Sea (Net Gain) and south-east (Balanced Seas). These regional MCZ projects will work with sea users and interest groups to identify MCZs and provide recommendations for sites within their regions to Government.