



Dive and Sea the Hebrides,
Shorepark, Lochbay, Waternish, Isle of Skye, IV55 8GD,
Phone: 01470 592219

WILDLIFE, BIODIVERSITY, POLLUTION & CITIZEN SCIENCE POLICY

We believe that responsible stewardship of the marine environment is intertwined with our expectation to use it, and we commit to achieving the best possible standard of sustainability, efficiency and pollution reduction. Adopting the mantra, leave only bubbles, we aim not just to 'limit impact' but where possible to protect and enhance the marine environment for the benefit of all species and future generations.

*During the Pandemic, Covid safety measures should be observed

Single Use Plastic & Wasteful Packaging

1. Discourage the use of single use plastics aboard.
2. Discourage the use of any disposable packaging aboard.
3. Lead by example and use or reusable items*

Refuse Disposal Aboard

1. Raise awareness with guests about why it is important that no rubbish enters the sea from our vessel. e.g. marine life entanglement, plastic entering the food chain, impact of toxins absorbed through diet, etc.
2. Remind passengers that absolutely no rubbish should be discarded overboard either intentionally or accidentally.
3. Advise guests where to securely dispose of rubbish when aboard.
4. Provide separate bins aboard to maximise recycling opportunities.
5. Ensure all waste is taken ashore and disposed of securely.

Plastic Pollution

1. Most divers are aware of the hazards of plastic pollution but we should highlight the importance of participation in plastic removal as a positive change for the marine environment.
2. Raise awareness of citizen science beach cleaning projects run both ourselves and by charities with which we work.
3. Advise why plastic pollution is so dangerous to the marine environment and the hazards it present to wildlife.
4. If we encounter plastic at sea, endeavor to remove it from the water and take ashore to dispose of safely.
5. Similarly, when ashore to explore, encourage removal of rubbish encountered. Provide collection bags.
6. Encourage ongoing participation in national plastic pollution projects and events.
7. Record data and submit to science projects and national charities to assist in campaigns for change in government policy and consumer behaviour.

Nurdles

If the opportunity arises, suggest participation in The Great Nurdle Hunt and provide the resource to undertake a count effectively and the means to ensure it is recorded.

Ghost Fishing

This is currently a widely discussed and emotive topic. Explain to divers the definition of ghost fishing and the times when it is appropriate to act.

1. Only attempt to remedy an incidence of ghost fishing if it presents NO threat or danger to yourself. Be sure you are trained and equipped to safely remove the hazard.
2. Lost creels.
 - a. Creels are laid in fleets, whereby a number of creels are joined with ropes and only the creels at both ends have surface marker buoys. Be sure the creel is lost and it is not simply that the adjoining rope, mid fleet, is hidden in seaweed, around rocks or in sand.
 - b. If you are certain a creel is lost, you may open the door to release any creatures trapped inside. Leave the door open to prevent future entrapment.
 - c. If you have a rope and buoy, then attach it to the creel to enable its recovery from the surface.
3. Nets, lost mooring ropes etc present a particular underwater hazard to divers as well as marine life and ONLY those experienced in recovery should attempt it. If possible mark the position of the hazard for recovery later.
4. Suggest keen participants join <https://www.ghostfishing.co.uk/>

Diving for dinner

Many of the sites we visit are 'strictly no take' sites. We recognise that enjoying a dived dinner can be a satisfying element of the expedition and we will advise you when it is permissible to land a small amount of shellfish, subject to the following conditions. The skippers decision is final.

Scallops:

1. In compliance with government fishery conservation measures we will enforce strict adherence to statutory size limits. You will be advised of that size and any shells below legal size will be returned to the sea.
2. We allow a quantity, appropriate to 'one for the pot/a dinner', to be landed. Any shells considered to be an excessive take, will be returned to the sea.

Crab:

1. We will permit, a limited number of crab, appropriate for a dinner at certain sites.
2. They must meet statutory size and must not be berried.
3. Crabs not satisfying these conditions will be returned to sea.

Lobster:

1. We believe that the catching of lobster by divers is best done on camera, and that they are best enjoyed underwater! With respect to conservation, diving for lobster is generally discouraged on our vessel. On rare occasion we will permit a very limited catch for the pot.
2. We would prefer that berried lobsters were not disturbed in the first instance, but in any event they will always be returned to sea.
3. Lobsters with 'V' notched tails should not be taken and will be returned to sea.
4. Any lobster we permit to be taken for personal use, must be of minimum legal size.

Crayfish:

1. Crayfish must be left underwater.
2. Any crayfish brought aboard will be returned to the sea.

Spearfishing:

1. Spearfishing is not permitted when diving from our vessel under any circumstance.

Wildlife disturbance

1. All skippers are WiSE trained and will operate in strict adherence to UK, European and International Wildlife Laws and Best Practice Guidelines at all times.
2. Wildlife disturbance in any form will not be permitted.
3. The skipper will advise and guide you in appropriate behaviour and the law.
4. Should we encounter protected species e.g. basking shark etc, and it is considered appropriate to enter the water with them, you will be advised how to behave, for the well-being of the creature as the primary priority. It is expected that your enjoyment of the encounter should be measured against that knowledge.
5. Failure to observe best practice in wildlife encounters may result in you being refused entry to the dive site while a protected species is present.

Citizen science

We participate actively in collaborative citizen science projects to assist scientists and conservation charities in gathering information to better understand the marine environment, the marine life that depend on it, their success, failures and threats. Through this data a better understanding can establish policies and achieve protections. It is our belief that contributing to this data collection as we go about our daily activities at sea is important. Divers have an inherent interest in the sea and whenever possible we will engage interested customers in participation in these projects and to provide them with the information and resources to become involved. We actively encourage ongoing participation.

The following are projects we have regularly or on occasion contributed to. We would encourage others to become involved in them, in the knowledge that very contribution, no matter how small, helps to gain better understanding;

- **Seasearch** Seabed & Marine Life Surveys for The Marine Conservation Society
- **Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust**
Reporting Sightings of Cetaceans
Provide Photographic ID records when possible.
- **The Shark Trust**
Report Basking Shark Sightings and Encounters
Report sightings of skates and rays
Report Egg case finds
- **RSPB**
Sea eagle, golden eagle monitoring
Corncrake reporting and call recording
- **British Diver Marine Life Rescue**
Report and assist with live stranding's of marine mammals
- **The Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme**
Report dead strandings for autopsy and research.
- **Skye Tidy Tidelines** - beach clean project, adopted 15 miles local coast and contribute statistics to the following who are amending their collection data sheets to reflect the industrial and commercial nature of the beach pollution that we encounter.
Marine Conservation Society – Big Beach Clean Project
Surfers Against Sewerage – Big beach Clean Project
- **The Great Nurdle Hunt**
- **Big Seaweed Search** by The Marine Conservation Society
- **The British Seahorse Survey**
- **Wildlife Sightings** (Jellyfish and marine turtles) by The Marine Conservation Society

Blue Carbon

Exciting opportunities are emerging for small scale blue carbon capture which we will explore and evolve as may be appropriate.

Rewilding

A current hot topic, it would be exciting to undertake any rewilding project that may be viable in our area and we propose to investigate opportunities that may be deliverable for us over the coming months.

Awareness Raising

The marine environment is not accessible to everyone. Its hard to make positive changes to an environment that you have no involvement or engagement with. Sometimes it is too far away to be considered important, or that the decisions that you make have any relevance or impact. No matter how far from the sea someone lives, the decision and choices they make can bring positive change.

1. Create a wider appreciation and knowledge of that what needs our protection though sharing of photography and video film footage, on social media.
2. Encourage visitors to share their experiences.
3. Share campaign messages from national charities
4. Create events for the community to become involved in.

Wreck Diving

There are limited opportunities for wreck diving around the coast of Skye. We generally discourage recreational salvage believing that 'artefacts' should be left for others to enjoy. If we all take a 'wee bit' there is soon nothing left. Everything on a vessel underwater has an official owner. It is also our responsibility to observe the 'Merchant and Shipping Act 1995' and the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 and to ensure that any items of significance that are recovered will be reported to 'The Receiver of Wrecks'.